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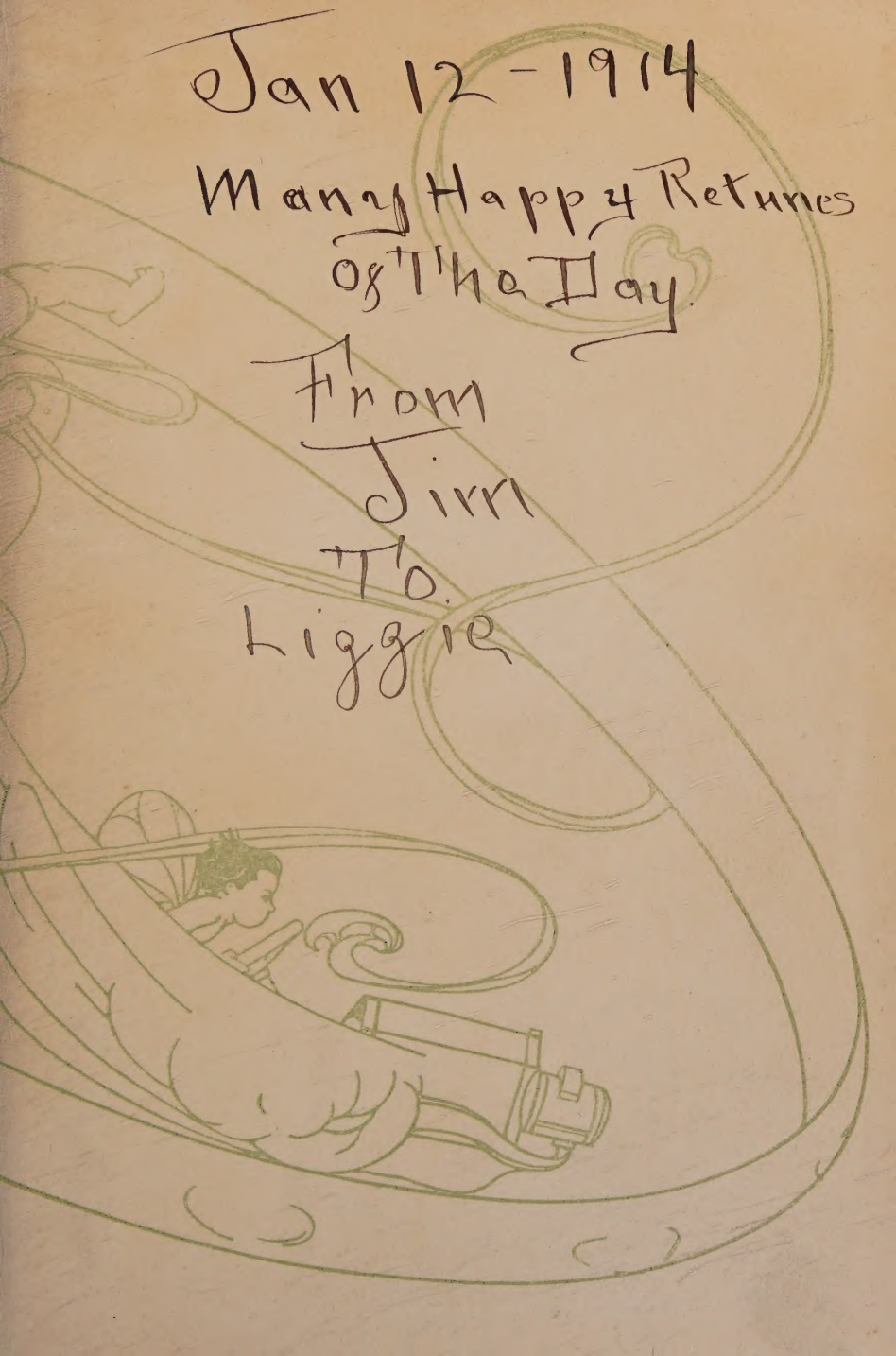
The SAPPHIRE BRACELET

EDWARD SALISBURY FIELD

Jan 12 - 1914

Many Happy Returnes
of the Day.

From
Jirri
To.
Liggie



The SAPPHIRE BRACELET

EDWARD SALISBURY FIELD
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
WILL GREFÉ

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The SAPPHIRE BRACELET

CHAPTER I

A PRETTY girl, looking very cool and attractive in a white muslin gown, descended from the veranda of the little Lake View Hotel, and directed her steps toward two distant maples, under which her hammock was slung, her way leading across a lawn yellow with dandelions. Only once she paused — to scan the lake, and to gaze wistfully at its one island, colored blue by the haze of a June afternoon.

She carried a white parasol, and a book bound in green buckram; she wore no hat. In the sun, her hair would have rivaled the dandelions, it was so deliciously and naturally yellow; and her eyes were as blue as the dis-

tant island, where, at that very moment, a picnic party from the hotel was doing its best to divide itself into fractions, each fraction containing an interested and interesting member of an opposite sex.

On the island, alas, save in one or two cases, the problem remained a problem, for the picnic party was sadly lacking in men. So, if the girl had gone to the picnic, instead of remaining at the hotel with her Aunt Harriet, perhaps by this time she would have been looking wistfully across the lake to the deserted hotel. Still, one always fancies one will have a pleasant time at a picnic, and grows surer of it as the day advances — that is, when one stays away. So, the girl felt just the least bit lonely and unhappy, even though she cared not a cent for any individual member of the picnic party.

"I couldn't have gone, anyway," she said to herself. "That train being so early made it quite impossible." Which might lead one to infer that she expected a friend, or some one, at least, by a certain train.

She was not really disconsolate, however, for she carried in her hand an exciting story.

She was sure it was exciting, for she had already read the last chapter, and it had ended most dramatically. Then, too, her hammock was most comfortable. Indeed, it was her own particular hammock, which she had brought with her from New York.

Therefore, when she approached the two maples, with every prospect of a peaceful afternoon, she was, naturally, surprised, and a little indignant, to find her hammock occupied by a young man; rather a handsome young man, to be sure, but also an interloping, vexatious young man, who must be shown his place, must be taught that he could not, with impunity, fall asleep in hammocks that belonged exclusively to pretty, attractive young ladies. For there could be no doubting it: the young man was fast asleep.

Perhaps if the girl had known him, she would have liked him, for Morton Prince was most likable. But she did not know him; she was ignorant that his name was Morton Prince. Indeed, she was aware of but three things: a young man was asleep in her hammock, she wanted her hammock, she meant to have it.

To accomplish her design, it was obviously necessary to awaken the young man. It might be that a cough would awaken him?

She coughed.

But Morton Prince slept through a whole series of coughs, whereat she eyed him reproachfully, then blushed a little as it occurred to her that, in a story book, he would be *the only man in the world*. And *the only man in the world* was always awakened, in story books, with— But she wanted her hammock.

Dropping both parasol and book, she grasped the rope supporting the hammock, and gave it a violent shake, causing Mr. Prince to stir uneasily. But he did not open his eyes.

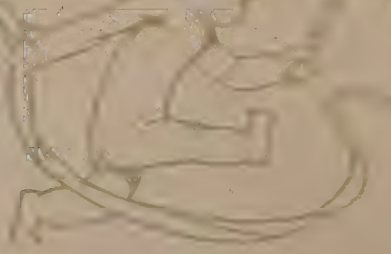
Again the hammock was shaken, this time with better success.

"Where the deuce am I?" murmured Mr. Prince, rubbing his eyes.

"You're in my hammock."

"Good old hammock," said Mr. Prince, preparing to take another nap.

"You mustn't go to sleep again! I say you mustn't!"



"Why not?" demanded Mr. Prince, sitting up suddenly.

"Because it's my hammock, and I want it."

"Oh!" said Mr. Prince. "Your hammock, is it? By Jove, your hammock, of course!" he added, rising hastily. "I'm sure I beg your pardon. I'm only half-awake, you see."

"Yes, I see," the girl replied coldly.

Mr. Morton Prince smiled disarmingly. "I was dead tired, and I didn't know it was a private hammock. I only arrived an hour ago," he explained. "It seems to be pleasant here," he continued, by way of making conversation.

"No doubt some people find it pleasant," said the girl in a tone of finality. "Good-afternoon."

"I say!" exclaimed Mr. Prince. "I hope you're not offended with me."

"Why should I be?"

"I don't know. But, somehow, I feel that you are."

"Really, I'm not."

"Are you sure?"

"I'm not so sure as I was when I said I wasn't."

"Perhaps I'd better go. But I hate to go with this misunderstanding between us."

The girl eyed him disapprovingly, then stooped to pick up her book.

"Let me," said Mr. Prince, making a hasty dive.

As he placed the book in her hands, the girl's face brightened. "You say you arrived an hour ago?" she asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Prince, greatly relieved to find his dismissal temporarily postponed. "Yes, an hour ago."

"But there is no train at that time."

"I came in a motor car."

"Oh!"

"Started from New York at five this morning. Not a bad record."

"You must have been in a hurry."

"I'm always in a hurry."

"How stupid of me!" exclaimed the girl. "You needn't say another word; I know now who you are. You see, I expected you on the four o'clock train."

"Er — yes," said Mr. Prince, vaguely

troubled, "quite so. The four o'clock train."

"But, of course, time is money in your profession."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Mr. Prince.

"I think it was clever of me to know you."

"You didn't, at first."

"Well, you see you are rather young-looking. I presume of course that you're a subordinate."

"I'm not a subordinate," declared Mr. Prince, with conviction. "That is, I may be this minute. But just you wait."

"Then you are the head of the agency?"

Mr. Prince looked puzzled, then squared his shoulders, impressively. "You've guessed it," he said.

"That simplifies matters. I feel, now, I can tell you everything."

"Yes, everything," said Mr. Prince. "That's what I want to know — everything."

"I hardly know where to begin," said the girl, seating herself in the hammock, and regarding the tips of her fingers.

"You might begin at the beginning," suggested Mr. Prince.

"That wouldn't be logical," said the girl.

"Why not?"

"Is it logical for a woman to be logical?"

"But you're a mere child," he objected.

"I'm not. I'm twenty."

"And I'm twenty-eight."

"A girl is older at twenty than a boy at twenty-eight."

"Than a man at twenty-eight," corrected Mr. Prince.

"You are awfully boyish to hold such a responsible position," said the girl.

"If I were not successful, would I be here?" he demanded.

"Since you are here, wouldn't it be more business-like to — to be business-like?"

"I am waiting to hear why you sent for me," said Mr. Prince, adopting what he deemed to be a professional manner.

"But I thought you knew. Surely the telegram —"

"Your telegram was most vague," said Mr. Prince.

"Didn't it tell you I needed your services?"

"That's why I'm here."

"Come to think of it, I don't believe it did tell you why I needed your services."

"That's just it," said Mr. Prince. "I came, hoping to be of service to you, but entirely ignorant as to the reason why my services were needed."

"Can't you guess?"

"Of course I can guess."

"Then guess."

"That would be hardly professional."

"No, I suppose not. Still, when one sends for a detective —"

"A detective?" exclaimed Mr. Prince, taken quite off his guard by the unexpectedness of it all.

"Yes, a detective. You are a detective, aren't you?"

"She asks me if I'm a detective," he said, appealing to the universe at large with a voice of amazement.

"Well, are you, or aren't you?"

"Did you never hear of Morton Prince?"

"I never did."

"Or of Red Fennessy, or of Anarchist Joe, or of — of —"

"Go on," said the girl.

"Red Fennessy is now serving fifteen years in jail for the Winchester bank robbery; Anarchist Joe is doing a life sentence for the Baltimore bomb outrage. And who put them there?"

"I give it up," said the girl.

"I put them there."

"And is Morton Prince in jail, too?"

"No. Morton Prince is not in jail. It is Morton Prince you see before you. I am Morton Prince."

"Not really?"

"Just as sure as I'm standing here."

"I never dreamed the agency would send such a famous detective."

"It would naturally send you the best it had," Mr. Prince explained modestly. "If you will be so good as to tell me why my services are needed."

"It is on a very delicate matter," said the girl.

"Ah, I see; a case in which caution and diplomacy are required."

"THANK YOU, SO MUCH," SAID MR. PRINCE, SEATING HIMSELF AT HER FEET

"Oh, lots of caution, and no end of diplomacy! Do you think you can manage it, Mr. Prince?"

"I'm sure of it."

"If you are tired of standing, you may sit down."

"Thank you so much," said Mr. Prince, seating himself at her feet, a position which, figuratively, of course, he was to occupy for some time to come.

CHAPTER II

THE girl, evidently at a loss where to begin her narrative, bestowed a tentative glance on Detective Prince, who sat silent, regarding her with trustful and appreciative eyes; she gazed, for a moment, at the sky. Naturally, one would hesitate to declare that she found in the color of the sky an answer to some vexing question. But it is said we are strangely influenced by colors, and the sky was wonderfully blue that afternoon. At all events, when her gaze left the sky, to rest once more on the approving Mr. Prince, she seemed to have acquired the information, confidence, or whatever it was she had been seeking.

"I am ready now," she said.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" asked Mr. Prince. "I can think better when I smoke."

"I hope you don't use morphine," said the girl.

"I'm a bit too modern for that. Why, I don't even use a magnifying glass!"

"I suppose modern methods are more — more modern."

"Oh, rather!" said Mr. Prince.

"Still, I presume you disguise yourself occasionally."

"That isn't necessary. Of course we occasionally disguise our true feelings," he explained.

As this statement was accompanied by a look of undisguised admiration, the girl had little reason for supposing this to be one of the occasions to which Detective Prince referred.

"I doubt if you ever have any feelings to disguise," she said.

"Oh, I say!" protested Mr. Prince.

"Of course, to me, you are a mere machine, possessing a coldly analytical mind, and no heart."

"Detectives often have hearts."

"Before they become detectives, perhaps."

"There is something in that."

"Then you'll admit that all detectives are heartless."

"I'll admit I lost my heart when I became a detective," Mr. Prince replied evasively.

"Perhaps it would be better if you were to smoke," said the girl.

Detective Prince drew a gold case from his pocket, and selected a cigarette.

"This is great!" he said.

"Does it really affect your mind?" asked the girl.

"Oh, rather!" said Mr. Prince. "I see things much more clearly through smoke."

"I suppose I'd better tell you all about the robbery," said the girl.

"A robbery? Good! Go on."

"It promises to be a very difficult case."

"It might be for some," said Mr. Prince, "but I'm no end of a dab at finding things; been doing it ever since I was a youngster."

"How very curious!"

"Not at all. Did you ever play *Button, button, who's got the button?*"

"Yes, but —"

"That's the way it began. I always knew where the button was. And then

there's that silly game with a dollar, where you hold hands under a table."

"I have never played it," said the girl.

"What, never played *Up Jenkins?*"

"Never!"

"Of course I've only played it with men," said Mr. Prince, "but I could generally tell where the dollar was without half-trying. It has always been so," he added vaguely.

"Aren't we losing time?" asked the girl.

"I'm not," replied Mr. Prince.

"Supposing you had been robbed of a sapphire bracelet?"

"That's different," he admitted. "Did the robbery take place here?"

"Where else?"

"Ah," said Mr. Prince, producing a gold pencil and a check book, "a sapphire bracelet, you say. Sapphires are blue, aren't they?"

"Generally."

"I think blue would be awfully becoming to you. Go on."

"Wouldn't it be more professional of you to ask me questions?"

"It would be," said Mr. Prince, "but I

thought best to adopt a different method in your case."

"Why?"

"One has to ask rather — er — intimate questions."

"Oh!"

"Still, perhaps it would be better."

"What a horrid profession!"

"I'll admit it has a disagreeable side. But there are certain pleasant features; one meets so many charming people."

"Criminals may be interesting, but I should hardly call them charming," said the girl.

"I was thinking of my clients."

"I suppose charming people are robbed occasionally."

"Yes, indeed! If that weren't so, I wouldn't be —"

"Wouldn't be what?"

"Wouldn't be a detective," said Mr. Prince.

"I can't afford to pay you a large sum if you are successful in finding the bracelet," said the girl.

"We never receive large fees, except from

banks and corporations. Of course, you pay me nothing if I fail."

"And if you succeed?"

"Six dollars."

"But that's a ridiculous price!"

"Four dollars, then."

"I mean it's absurdly cheap."

"We detectives look on private cases, such as yours, as a diversion," said Mr. Prince. "It's restful, after tracking people through subways, and chasing them in hansoms, and all that sort of thing. I say, are you fond of sailing?"

"I'm mad about it."

"I've a sloop yacht that's a regular hummer; raced it to the Bermudas last year."

"I didn't know detectives were yachtsmen," said the girl.

"I was chasing a criminal," said Mr. Prince. "But he arrived first, and took refuge under the British flag."

"Goodness!"

"I got him, though; I kidnapped him, you know. He was an awful rascal."

"I should think a little case like mine would seem stupid, after that."

"Not at all. Let's see, where were we, anyway?"

"We hadn't got very far."

"But I feel that we're progressing," said Mr. Prince, looking at her with an expression of great hopefulness.

"Of course you see much that is hidden from me," said the girl.

Detective Prince now wrote two words on the back of a blank check.

"I'm making a note of something," he explained. "I say, are there two 'p's' in sapphire?"

"I — Why, I'm not sure."

"It looks awfully queer with only one."

"If it looks queer, it's probably right," said the girl.

"I'm glad you can't spell," said Mr. Prince. "I hate people who know everything."

"I admire them."

"Detectives know a great deal about certain things," said Mr. Prince. "You ought to see me play polo."

"Polo?"

"I used to be a mounted policeman before

I became a detective, you know, and I've never lost my fondness for horses."

"But isn't polo an expensive game?"

"We detectives make a thundering lot of money. I'm thinking of retiring soon."

"I suppose it is a strain."

"It's beginning to be an awful strain," said Mr. Prince. "I shouldn't wonder if this were to be my last case."

"You will probably marry some nice, reformed criminal, and settle down," said the girl.

"I shall do nothing of the sort."

"Perhaps bachelors are happier."

"They're not," said Mr. Prince.

"I hope you're not thinking of marrying above your station," said the girl.

"A detective is as good as anybody," declared Mr. Prince.

"Aren't we becoming a bit personal."

"By Jove! We are, aren't we?"

"It's always a mistake to become personal."

"One has to in my profession. It's the personal note always that leads to clues, you know."

"But you haven't done a thing toward finding the sapphire bracelet."

"I've been leading up to it. A detective's first duty it to become acquainted with his client, and to inspire her with confidence, and all that sort of thing."

"I can't say you've been altogether successful."

"That," said Mr. Prince, "is because you haven't yet become acquainted with me."

"I doubt if any one could ever really become acquainted with a detective," said the girl; "they're so suspicious, and relentless, and cynical."

"Oh, I say," exclaimed Mr. Prince, "I'm not cynical!"

"Then you still retain a little faith in mankind?"

"A little."

"And you are not entirely cynical?"

"Er — not entirely."

"I don't understand it," said the girl.

"Well, you see, I've always dealt with the better class of criminals — bank presidents and railroad officials, you know."

"Was Red Fennessy a bank president?"

"That was before I reached the top of the ladder," Mr. Prince replied uneasily. "What about that sapphire bracelet, anyway? You couldn't have mislaid it, could you?"

"That would have been impossible."

"It's easy to mislay things."

"I couldn't have mislaid that bracelet. I'm sure of it."

"Then some one must have stolen it," said Mr. Prince. "When did you see it last?"

"Yesterday evening."

"Before or after dinner?"

"Before dinner."

"It might have been a bellboy."

"There aren't any."

"Or a chambermaid."

"I'm sure it wasn't."

"Rather a difficult problem," said Mr. Prince, wrinkling his forehead.

"It wasn't in my room when I went upstairs, after dinner," the girl volunteered.

"By Jove! Then it must have been a guest who took it."

"I'd hate to think so."

"I — I really ought to see the room," said Mr. Prince.

"You can see it to-morrow," said the girl. "It's the one in the corner, on the second floor. Yes, the one with open shutters."

Mr. Prince favored the window indicated with a glance, then turned once more to the girl.

"I have a theory," he said.

"What, so soon?"

"It came to me all of a sudden. That's the way things usually come to me."

"After a series of deductions, no doubt."

"Rather! I've been deducing right along, ever since I met you."

"And your theory?"

"That," said Mr. Prince, "is a secret."

"I presume it would be hardly professional to tell me, but I'm dying to know."

"You'd be surprised if I were to tell you — uncommonly surprised."

"I like surprises."

"No," said Mr. Prince firmly, "it would never do. Can you describe the bracelet so that I'd know it if I saw it?"

"Let me see," said the girl.

"Not too fast," cautioned Mr. Prince, preparing to make notes.

"I should say it contained nine or ten sapphires."

"Big ones?"

"Beauties! And it wasn't a clasp bracelet; it was one of the kind you slip over your hand."

"Yes, I know," said Mr. Prince.

"And there was a little ribbon of diamonds running in and out between the sapphires."

"I don't think I understand."

"You'd understand in a moment if you saw it," said the girl. "And it was chased."

"I think pearls are more chaste," said Mr. Prince. "Do you care for pearls?"

"Do you really believe you'll be able to find the bracelet?" asked the girl.

"I'm sure I'll find it."

"If you'll excuse me, I think I'll go in now," said the girl.

"There are lots of questions I haven't asked you," objected Mr. Prince. "Besides, the hotel is deserted — everybody's gone to a picnic."

"My aunt didn't go to the picnic. There she is, on the veranda."

The girl rose from the hammock; Mr. Prince sprang to his feet.

"I must see you again, soon," he said.

"Is it necessary?"

"Absolutely!"

"Perhaps if you were to be at the boathouse, at five —"

"I'll be there," said Mr. Prince.

"You mustn't count on seeing me."

"But you'll come if you can?"

"Yes, if I can. Good-afternoon."

Mr. Prince watched the girl as she retreated across the lawn; she was wonderfully graceful, he thought, and — By Jove, she had gone off without her book! He picked it up, almost tenderly, then settled himself in the hammock.

"I forgot to ask her if I might, but I'm sure she wouldn't mind," he said to himself. "I'll stay here till half-past four, and then I'll look about for that boathouse. I've got myself into no end of a mess, I fancy. But she's — she's so —"

Mr. Prince gazed dreamily at the sky.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Mr. Prince had left New York in his motor car at five o'clock that morning, it had been with the intention of dining at the Kenwood Country Club, which lay some twenty odd miles beyond the little Lake View Hotel where he now was. Of course, it was still possible for him to dine there, even if he kept his appointment at the boathouse, an appointment he had not the slightest intention of missing. That he should play in the golf tournament, to be held on the Kenwood links next day, was, however, just the least bit doubtful. He could manage it by making an early start in the morning. But so much depended on his interview with the girl!

He wondered if she had suspected he was

not a detective. He had been rather clever in his deceit, he thought. Still, he mustn't underestimate her intelligence; that would be a grave mistake. He was sure he hadn't underestimated her charm. She was the most charming creature it had ever been his good fortune to meet. It was, moreover, quite too bad that their meeting should have been the result of a misunderstanding on her part.

Great Scott! Suppose a man should arrive on the four o'clock train! And suppose he were a detective! Mr. Prince knew vaguely that there were laws — unpleasant laws — applying to citizens who passed themselves off as police officers. And what were detectives but glorified policemen?

"I may have got myself into no end of a scrape," he thought, a trifle ruefully.

Still, it was very probable that no detective would arrive by the four o'clock train. Besides, he wouldn't have missed meeting the girl for anything — not for a year in state's prison; not for two years, by George!

This sincere, if misguided, declaration tended to restore his confidence amazingly. Looking at his watch, he saw it was now but half-past three; a half-hour yet to dream of the girl before the fateful four o'clock train should arrive. She was so pretty, and her smile so adorable; the hint of mischief in her eyes was truly enchanting; he was her slave, her willing slave, and he would follow her — not openly, of course, for that would give offense. But he'd follow her, and be near her always till — till — Just what Mr. Prince resolved, only the sandman knew, for Mr. Prince was once more fast asleep.

Let it be said in his defense, if sleep need a defense, that Mr. Prince had gone to bed late the night before; also, he had risen at five, and acting as his own chaffeur, had driven a long distance. Then, too, the hammock was most comfortable; its enticement was not to be denied.

The shadows lengthened, creeping eastward; a faint whistle announced the approach of the four o'clock train; ten minutes later, a shabby omnibus, drawn by two

dejected-looking horses, drew up before the hotel. And still Mr. Prince slept.

That he should be awakened twice in one afternoon, and each time by a girl, seems strange, indeed. But the arm of coincidence is long, and its powers elastic, to be stretched as easily as one stretches the truth. Which accounts, perhaps, for the fact that it was a firm young hand on his shoulder that now summoned Mr. Prince from slumberland.

He obeyed the summons slowly and sleepily — so slowly that the girl grew a little impatient.

"You've got to wake up," she said.

"Why?" demanded Mr. Prince, opening his eyes.

"Because I want the hammock."

Mr. Prince looked hurt.

"I'm in a hurry," said the girl, who was evidently a servant.

"Oh!" said Mr. Prince, rising to his feet. "Here, I'll help you."

Slipping the hooks from their supporting ropes, he rolled the hammock into a neat bundle. "Is the four o'clock train in yet?" he asked.

"The 'bus arrived five minutes ago."

"Any passengers?"

"Only one — a man."

"Ah!" said Mr. Prince.

The girl now picked up the hammock and started toward the hotel, Mr. Prince gazing after her with troubled eyes.

"That explains it," he said to himself, "the man who came in the 'bus must have been a detective. Or else, why the deuce did she send a chambermaid for her hammock?"

Perhaps it was her method of dismissing him from the case. He must remember, however, that she may not have known he was occupying her hammock. Perhaps he had but witnessed a daily occurrence? Perhaps the hammock was removed to the hotel every afternoon at four? Perhaps he had been awakened by the chambermaid simply because his presence in the hammock had prevented her from following an established custom? Here was a whole series of plausible conjectures. Besides, it was silly to take other than a hopeful view of things.

Yet it wasn't so easy to be optimistic

where one's affections were engaged. And certainly his affections were engaged. Oh, rather! His meeting with the girl meant far more to him than a pleasant incident of an idle afternoon. It was an event — a big, breathless, bewildering event. It was dashed romantic, too. Mr. Prince was agreeably surprised to find there was so much romance left in the world.

And to think he had quitted New York that morning with no other idea than to reach the Kenwood Club by dinner time, and to drive a piffling golf ball a little farther, to approach a little better, and to putt a little truer than the next man, on the morrow. And here he was, acting quite like a hero in a story book. True, he had told more lies than lovers usually tell in story books. Which proved, by George, that truth was stranger than fiction!

But they would be difficult to explain, those lies. That is, they might be. It would make a great difference if his theory concerning the disappearance of the bracelet proved correct. It wasn't exactly a theory, either; it was little more than an impression.

Yet Mr. Prince couldn't help suspecting that the girl had not been robbed of a sapphire bracelet.

Still, she might have been robbed. And she might have been expecting a detective by the four-o'clock train. If this were true, it would mean, of course, that the single passenger in the hotel 'bus had been a detective. By Jove! She might be consulting him this very minute!

Mr. Prince's eye now encountered the book bound in green buckram, which lay on the grass, not far away, the encounter resulting in the book being transferred to his pocket. Although not particularly important in itself, the fact of having it in his pocket comforted him.

"It will, at least, give me an opportunity to speak to her again," he said to himself, "even if she doesn't keep her appointment at the boathouse."

The clerk of the Lake View Hotel, a brisk, business-like young man, possessing a mop of curly brown hair, and wearing a wonderful green tie, was making out bills. He

had just decided that six days, at three dollars and a half a day, plus extra charges for trunks, and 'bus fare, came to twenty-two dollars and twenty-five cents, when Mr. Prince approached the counter behind which he sat, and reached for the hotel register.

"Pleasant day," observed the clerk, nodding affably. "Will you stop with us to-night?"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Mr. Prince, studying the last entry on the register.

"Can give you a good room, with a bath," volunteered the clerk.

"I'll take it."

"Can't show it to you yet."

"Any time before dinner will do."

"Six o'clock, then."

"That will do nicely."

"If you want your automobile washed —"

"I think not, thanks. Where is the boat-house from here?"

"You go past the barn, then turn to your right," said the clerk. "If you want to go for a row, just help yourself to anything you see."

"Any sailboats?"

"Two. But they're both over to the island to-day. You can have one to-morrow."

"Perhaps I'll want one to-morrow," said Mr. Prince.

"Gee, but it must be great to travel around like that in an automobile!" thought the clerk.

"By Jove, it would be great if I could take her for a sail to-morrow!" thought Mr. Prince. "Of course I'd have to ask her aunt, too. I wonder what she's like! That chap who registered last night may be a detective, though."

"Dave Warner, N. Y." The name wasn't at all reassuring; nor was the city he had given as his place of residence. Still, one needn't borrow trouble. Besides, the boathouse was the real test; if she came to the boathouse, all was well. Having reached this decision, Mr. Prince left the hotel, and, following the directions given him by the clerk, soon came to a fringe of willows. Beyond this, he discovered a little pavilion, and a primitive landing, to which several rowboats were moored.

Mr. Prince inspected the boats carefully. He tried to think of some plausible excuse that would permit of his taking the girl for a row. He could think of none. But there was no harm in holding the boats in mind. Chance, or fate — Mr. Prince was strongly inclined to believe it was fate — had been most generous to him that afternoon. Very well, he would leave it to fate then. Only he would keep his eyes open, and be ready to act promptly if opportunity offered. In the meantime, he would sit on a bench in the little pavilion, and take a peep into the book he carried in his pocket.

From where he stood, Mr. Prince could see but part of the interior of the pavilion he now approached; he was, therefore, quite unprepared to find it occupied — occupied by a man. The man in question, tall, dark, and powerfully built, wore checked clothes and a black mustache; a resplendent diamond flashed from the little finger of his left hand.

Seeing Mr. Prince, the man laid aside the newspaper he had been reading, and eyed the newcomer keenly.

"I think," he said, "you are the man I want to talk to."

Mr. Prince started guiltily. "I don't believe I — er — quite understand," he faltered.

"My name is Dave Warner," said the man.

Mr. Prince managed a sickly smile. "I'm sorry, Mr. Warner, but I have no time to spare. I — I was just going back to the hotel."

"In that case, I'll go with you," said Mr. Warner.

"Trapped!" muttered Mr. Prince.

"I didn't catch that," said Mr. Warner.

"It was nothing," said Mr. Prince. "I was just — er — wondering what you — er — wanted."

"A little matter of business," Mr. Warner explained. "You hail from New York City, don't you?"

"Y — es," admitted Mr. Prince.

"Thought so. There's something about New Yorkers — I'm one, myself. Besides, your chug-wagon wears a New York number."

"There's no use lying to a real detective," thought Mr. Prince. "I'm glad I didn't attempt to deceive him."

"Do you know how far it is from little old New York to this place?"

"Only approximately."

"He doesn't know how far it is," said Mr. Warner, addressing the lake. "Now, what d'ye think of that?"

"I say!" exclaimed Mr. Prince. "What has that got to do with it?"

"I guess it's about time to talk business," said Mr. Warner.

"I wonder," thought Mr. Prince, "if I dare offer him money. It isn't exactly honest to try and buy people off. But, dash it all, what else can I do?"

"You don't look to me like you would let a little money stand in the way of your comfort and happiness," Mr. Warner continued.

"I'm willing to pay a fair price, but not a cent more. I'm inclined to be liberal, but I won't be imposed upon."

"That," said Mr. Warner, "is the proper spirit."

Mr. Prince drew from his pocket, a neat leather case containing bank notes. "How much do you want?" he asked with a brisk air of business.

"Sixty-five dollars."

"Cheap enough," thought Mr. Prince, counting out the sum mentioned, and passing it to his companion.

"Hold on a minute," said Mr. Warner, "while I write a receipt."

"Wouldn't a receipt be the least bit — er — inconvenient?"

"Just as you like. It's customary, but it ain't necessary. Anyway, I'm prepared to deliver the goods. What's more, you got a ten-year guarantee."

"I fancy it will be all right without the guarantee," said Mr. Prince.

"You can bet your sweet life it will! It's the best in the market, and it works like a charm."

"Er — what?"

"I say the Sparrow Speedometer is the grandest speedometer made; it registers miles, and fractions of miles, up to ten thousand, and the sixty-five dollar one has a

clock attached to it, besides. Hullo! What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing — nothing at all," said the dazed Mr. Prince. "Only I thought — That is, I had been led to believe — That is —"

"Didn't the clerk at the hotel put you wise to me?" demanded Mr. Warner.

"Yes, yes. What I meant was, I had no idea it was so late."

"It's only five minutes to five," said Mr. Warner, glancing at his watch. "Restful little place, this. Dropped off here to spend the night. Can't ever tell when you're going to strike business, though."

Five minutes to five! The girl had promised to be at the boathouse at five, if she came at all. And Mr. Dave Warner had just lighted a long, black cigar. He mustn't be allowed to remain in the pavilion; he must be got rid of at all hazards.

CHAPTER IV

"OF course I know the Sparrow Speedometer, and have always meant to have one on my car," Mr. Prince began tentatively. "But you know how one puts things off?"

"Oh, Lord, yes!"

"So, when the clerk told me about you, I was quite prepared to buy one."

"Guess you've proved that," said Mr. Warner. "Got your money, ain't I?"

"That's it; you've got my money, but I haven't yet received the speedometer."

"It's at the hotel."

"But you'll put it on the car for me?"

"Sure, I will. Any time you say."

"As a matter of fact, I'm leaving at half-past five."

Mr. Warner rose reluctantly. "I sup-

pose I'd better get busy, then," he said. "It's a kinda mean job to put 'em on. Selling 'em's a cinch, though. Don't expect it'll be ready for you for half an hour yet. See you before you go. So-long!"

Mr. Prince waited till Mr. Warner had disappeared through the fringe of willows; then sat down, and breathed a great sigh of relief.

"It's the very deuce what a guilty conscience will do to a man," he thought. "By George, I feel ten years older! It's crossing bridges before they come to them, and looking for trouble where there isn't any, that makes men old before their time," he concluded philosophically.

It was now five o'clock, the hour when the girl had said she would be at the boathouse — if she could come at all; a light wind rippled the lake, and stirred the fringe of willows; to the left of the island, a sail shone like silver in the sun. But sails, and winds, and willows interested Mr. Prince not at all; he kicked his heels impatiently, glancing every half-minute at his watch.

Would she come? Or wouldn't she?

Women were, of course, proverbially late in keeping appointments, and, for aught he knew, the proverb applied to girls, as well. Indeed, it was logical to suppose that all the cornerstones of this womanly failing had been laid during the tender years of girlhood. Still, it wasn't fair to look on it as entirely a feminine trait; he knew men, dozens of them, who were utterly unreliable when it came to keeping appointments. He wasn't altogether reliable, himself. But such an important appointment! Mr. Prince left the pavilion, to pace nervously up and down before the boat landing.

Ah! Some one was coming through the willows — some one dressed in white. Mr. Prince threw his cigarette into the water, adjusted his tie with uncertain fingers, then gazed resolutely at the island. It wouldn't do to appear too eager; he would wait till she was almost beside him before turning. His attitude, moreover, would be that of one keeping an important business appointment, rather than that of a lover keeping a tryst. So much depended on this meeting, that Mr. Prince determined to be impersonal, and de-

tective-like, at any cost. He might even hint to her that time was money — to detectives, and that, as a class, members of his profession did not like to be kept waiting since time was often of supreme importance to success.

That extra instinct which lovers seem, at times, to possess, told him she was now quite near. Perhaps he might venture to turn?

He turned.

This manœuvre, however, proved fatal to Mr. Prince's impersonal, detective-like manner; it fell from him as leaves fall from the maples in autumn. For the glimpse of white Mr. Prince had caught through the willows had been a glimpse of white apron, and the girl who wore it was the chambermaid who had taken the hammock away from him earlier in the afternoon.

Still, perhaps she carried a message from *her?* If she could send the chambermaid for her hammock, she could also send her to the boathouse. It might be that, finding it impossible to come herself — she had seemed a bit doubtful about being able to come — she had dispatched this girl to arrange for a new appointment.

"Were you looking for me?" asked Mr. Prince.

"Oh, no, sir! Mr. Smith sent me down to see if the boats had left the island yet."

"Ah!" said Mr. Prince.

"I only see one," said the girl. "I guess dinner will be late to-night."

Mr. Prince remained silent. The girl assured herself that she had not overlooked the second sail, then turned, and disappeared through the fringe of willows. Left alone, Mr. Prince lighted a cigarette, and, entering the pavilion, stared moodily across the lake. She hadn't come! She probably wouldn't come! He had left it all to fate, and fate had dealt shabbily with him. Not that he could have done much for himself that afternoon. But there would be other afternoons — oh, rather! Of course, he wasn't worthy of her. He could be more worthy of her than he was though. He would be, by George! Besides, if to feel unworthy were a real bar, only blackguards would go a-wooing, and such a state of affairs would be quite too dreadful. Mr. Prince drew *her* book from his pocket, to gaze at it long and ear-

nestly. He noticed now, what he had not noticed before: It was plainly a detective story.

"Hm!" thought Mr. Prince. "That explains several things — everything, in fact. What an ass I was not to have guessed it! She had this book in her hand when she asked me if I were a detective. Power of suggestion, and all that sort of thing. Why, it's as plain as can be!"

It was, of course, a bit humiliating to have made this discovery so late in the day. It was discouraging, too — uncommonly discouraging. A chap didn't start building a house of hope every afternoon, nor as often as once in a blue moon. And when he did start building, it made him deuced sad to learn he'd been building on sand. Yet there must be a firmer foundation somewhere. Mr. Prince resolved not only to find this firmer foundation, but to rear an edifice on it that should reach the stars. In the meantime, there was much to be grateful for.

He was glad she liked detective stories, for he rather liked them, himself. Reading wasn't at all in his line. But, once in a while,

when there was nothing better to do — the time he'd broken three ribs playing polo, for instance; he'd read a thundering lot, then. Anyway, it was a good sign. That Miss Chalmers at Bar Harbor, last year — how she did run on about books! And he'd never read a single one she'd mentioned. Queer books by people with queer names. It made a chap feel dashed ignorant. Yet she couldn't swim a stroke, and was afraid of horses.

But the girl he'd met this afternoon was different. She was crazy about sailing, for one thing; she'd said so, herself. And he'd wager she wasn't afraid of anything. Well, a mouse, perhaps, or a cow. But there was something appealing and adorable in being afraid of a cow; it was so feminine. And he'd teach her to ride, if she didn't already know how; and he'd get up a party for a short cruise on his yacht; and — and —

Discovering where his dreams were leading him, Mr. Prince smiled ruefully. Dreams were all very well, but there was much to be done before they could come true. He didn't know where she lived; he didn't

even know her name. By Jove! Why hadn't he thought of it before? Opening the book, he scanned the fly leaf eagerly. Yes, there it was, written rather scrawlingly in pencil.

It wasn't loyal, it was even absurd, yet Mr. Prince was greatly disappointed; for the name written on the fly leaf was "Gladys Schwartz." Mr. Prince felt instinctively that he could never be happy with a girl named Gladys Schwartz. She might be everything that was charming; she might have eyes like — like stars, by George, and lips like cherries! But Gladys Schwartz! Returning the book to his pocket, Mr. Prince rose, and walked wearily toward the hotel.

When an ideal is shattered, sharp splinters are sent flying, to pierce the heart. Mr. Prince's heart was pierced in at least a dozen places, or so it seemed to him. He asked himself plaintively that time-worn question: "What's in a name?" He answered it by declaring there was nothing in a name.

Gladys Schwartz!

Once more Mr. Prince reasoned with himself, but as he reasoned in a circle, he natu-

rally arrived, before long, at the point from which he had started.

"It's quite useless," he finally decided, "I could never love a girl named Gladys Schwartz. And if I could, she probably could never love me."

So his meeting with the girl had been but an incident, after all. And he had considered it, not so long ago, a big, breathless, bewildering event. Still, he had been mistaken before. And he probably would be again — oh, rather! He'd drive to the Kenwood Club after dinner, and, on the morrow, drown his sorrows in golf. He'd show them how to play the game, by George! And, after he'd won the tournament, he'd challenge the club's professional, and beat him. And he'd enter his name for the Kinghaven Cup, to be played for next week near Pittsburg. And then he'd go somewhere — to Bar Harbor, perhaps. And after that — Mr. Prince sighed dismally.

As he neared the hotel, however, his thoughts took a more practical turn; he would get his bag from his car, and tidy up a bit before dinner. No, he would send a

boy for it. A stop at the car would mean an interview with Mr. Dave Warner, and Mr. Prince didn't feel in the humor for talking to Mr. Warner. Hadn't Mr. Warner sold him a speedometer? How the deuce could a chap plead not guilty to a charge of speeding, when he had a speedometer staring him in the face? It was neither safe, nor sensible, to know how fast one went. Besides, there were far better speedometers in the market than the Sparrow.

"Your room's ready for you," said the clerk, ringing a bell.

"Will you send some one for my bag? It's in my motor."

"I'll send for it at once," said the clerk, pushing the register toward Mr. Prince.

While he was writing his name, the chambermaid, whom he had seen last at the boat landing, appeared.

"Show this gentleman to Room Sixteen," said the clerk.

Mr. Prince followed the chambermaid upstairs, paused while she unlocked the door, then entered his room. It seemed to be a

corner room. It seemed — By Jove! Hastening to the window, he looked out on the lawn. Yes, there were the two maples under which her hammock had been swung; and this was the room she had pointed out to him as hers. For a man who had renounced all thought of love, Mr. Prince was extravagantly excited.

"I say," he exclaimed, "wasn't this room occupied — er — this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir. It was Miss Randolph's room. Her aunt had the next one, Number Seventeen. They left on the five o'clock train."

"Miss Randolph! Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir; Miss Dorothy Randolph."

"I — er — found a book this afternoon. It appears to belong to a — er — Miss Gladys Schwartz. Here it is."

"Oh, that belongs to the hotel!" said the maid. "Or at least I guess it does. Miss Schwartz left it behind when she went away last month. You can read it if you want to."

"Thank you," said Mr. Prince, "but I'd rather not keep it, if you don't mind."

As soon as the maid had gone from the room, Mr. Prince sank into a chair and gazed

ecstatically at the ceiling. Dorothy Randolph! What a beautiful name! By George, he'd never doubt his instinct again! Something had told him he could never love a girl named Gladys Schwartz. And now he knew why.

Dorothy Randolph!

CHAPTER V

SO it was Miss Dorothy Randolph, and not Miss Gladys Schwartz, who had sought his services as a detective. Mr. Prince felt ten years younger, and at least a hundred years happier. It was thoughtless of him not to have tipped the chambermaid who had made this clear to him, but he would attend to that later. In the meantime — And Miss Randolph — Miss Dorothy — had left, with her aunt, on the five o'clock train. This, of course, was not so satisfactory. Yet it explained a great deal — everything, in fact.

In the first place, it was quite as he had supposed; Miss Dorothy had *not* been robbed of a sapphire bracelet. Indeed, now he came to think of it, she had never stated positively that she had been robbed; and she had

been most careful not to refer to the bracelet as "my bracelet." He had been too taken up with his own deceit to remember it at the time, but he remembered it perfectly — now. And he remembered the hint of mischief in her eyes, the adroitness with which she had evaded his questions. Finally, if one needed further proof, there was the appointment at the boathouse for five o'clock. "I will come if I can," she had said, knowing well she couldn't come, as she was leaving on the five o'clock train. In short, he had been most grievously deceived.

But the point was this: She probably considered the incident closed, and therein lay his advantage; for it wasn't closed, not by a great deal. Mr. Prince resolved, then and there, not only to pay her out, but to — He smiled tenderly, which would lead one to believe that his second resolve was, in some way, connected with sentiment — a sentiment that touched the heart gently to happiness.

Having allowed himself the luxury of a bath and fresh linen, Mr. Prince went downstairs. He was very hungry; he felt, too, that a cocktail would taste uncommonly good.

And, aside from that, he was most anxious to consult the hotel register.

It did not take long to learn all the register could teach him; Miss Dorothy Randolph and her aunt had arrived six days ago; they had registered from New York; the aunt's name was Mrs. Robert Alexander. From the clerk he learned that the five o'clock train was the best-equipped train on the line, and that it should reach New York at ten-twenty-three that evening. So they had evidently gone to New York. And now for that cocktail.

"I'm sorry," said the clerk, "but we're strictly temperance in this hotel. The old lady who owns it had a son go to the bad through drink, and—"

"I see," said Mr. Prince. "And, by George, I don't blame her!"

"Of course I keep a flask for emergencies."

"Not for me; thanks. Is the dining room open yet?"

"It will be open in about fifteen minutes. I'm afraid I can't give you a table to yourself; we're a little crowded just now."

"Oh, that's all right," Mr. Prince replied carelessly, little dreaming what an important part his place at a certain table in the dining room was to play.

From his chair on the veranda, Mr. Prince surveyed the picnic party as it filed past him; he saw a score of sun-burned, tired faces; he heard the young miss of seventeen implore the waggish young man of thirty-seven not to make her laugh any more. It was the waggish young man, no doubt, to whom the lady with the henna-colored hair referred as being "such an acquisition." She herself was such a dressy lady that Mr. Prince couldn't help noticing her, or recognizing her, later, when he found himself sitting next to her at dinner.

Mr. Dave Warner, who also sat at this table, greeted Mr. Prince most cordially.

"Well, I got it on," he announced.

"Yes, I see you have," Mr. Prince replied absently.

"I mean the speedometer."

"The speedometer, of course," said Mr. Prince. "How stupid of me!"

"I expect you thought I meant this," said

Mr. Warner, indicating the large diamond he wore on his little finger. "Won it in a raffle last week. Worth three hundred if it's worth a cent, and all it cost me was a dollar ticket. No luck at all. What?"

As Mr. Prince did not heed his explanation, Mr. Warner concluded that his late patron was "stuck up," and turned his attention to the soup before him, thereby doing Mr. Prince a grave injustice; for, as a matter of truth, Mr. Prince was not in the least "stuck up"; it was simply that he was preoccupied. And his preoccupation took the form of staring at the lady on his left, the lady with the henna-colored hair.

It sounds rude, but really it wasn't, for his stare did not include her face. Indeed, it was the hand that held her soup spoon that interested him. Circling the wrist, above this hand, he had discovered a bracelet. And the bracelet was set with sapphires — one, two, three, four. He couldn't count them, of course, but there seemed to be nine or ten. And there was no mistaking the little ribbon of diamonds that ran in and out, between the sapphires.

"You'd understand in a moment if you saw it," the girl had said, when he had failed, from her description, to make a picture of the bracelet in his mind. And now he had seen, and he understood perfectly; the bracelet the woman on his left wore was the bracelet Miss Dorothy Randolph had described — there could be no doubt of it.

Miss Randolph had said it was chased, too. And he had been silly enough to think she meant chaste. To make proof more conclusive, the gold part of the bracelet was chased in delicate pattern. And, by Jove, the woman wearing the bracelet was agitated! Wasn't her hand trembling?

Perhaps the lady with the henna-colored hair had read somewhere that one should fill a soup spoon by pushing it away, and not toward one? Perhaps she thought, since the young man on her right continued to stare at her hand, that it might be well to abandon the latter method as being — well, a trifle archaic? At all events, she now began to spoon her soup differently. And still the young man stared.

This, of course, is merely a theory. Yet

there's no denying the lady's hand now trembled. Indeed, detectives even more experienced than Mr. Prince would have agreed that she was agitated. And a visible agitation is, as every one knows, an evidence of mental distress.

Why, then, was the lady distressed? Was it possible she wore a stolen bracelet? Was it consciousness of guilt that made her hand tremble? Or was it embarrassment?

A swift glance at her face told Mr. Prince that it was quite red. Here was another suspicious sign. The flush of shame, and the blush of innocence are, unfortunately, very much alike. Still, ladies with henna-colored hair did not, as a rule — Or did they? Mr. Prince wasn't quite sure whether they did or didn't; he was positive, however, that the bracelet the lady wore was the bracelet Miss Randolph had described to him that afternoon; the matter did not admit of doubt.

Assured of this, Mr. Prince turned his attention to his dinner. But occasionally his eyes would stray to the left; the bracelet fascinated him.

A tender twilight had marked the close of this perfect June day. But now stars were being scattered over the sky, while the world waited for the miracle of night.

Mr. Prince also waited for a miracle, but of another sort. The miracle he had in mind was one that should permit of his addressing the lady with the henna-colored hair. She had left the dining room some time ago, and was now sitting on the hotel veranda. She was alone, too. Moreover, save for himself and the lady, the veranda was deserted. This surely was in his favor. But now could he turn it to account?

Mr. Prince hovered near the precipice of a decision, but could not find the courage to step off into space. He might land on the jagged rocks of her displeasure, and that would hurt. Besides, it was dashed ungentlemanly for a strange man to address a strange woman, even when the woman did wear a bracelet that was —

"It's a deuced queer situation, any way you look at it," Mr. Prince confided to himself. "Hang it all, I'm blessed if I know what to do! If she'd only drop her fan!"

BUT OCCASIONALLY HIS EYES WOULD STRAY TO THE LEFT;
THE BRACELET FASCINATED HIM

Having reduced the miracle he desired performed from a vague, indefinite something, to the practical proportions of a lady's fan, Mr. Prince lighted a cigarette, and waited.

It is, of course, quite impossible that the lady with the fan could have read his thoughts, for Mr. Prince's chair was separated from hers by at least five feet, and he had not glanced at her more than twenty times since he had appeared on the veranda. Nor could she have dreamed that, in dropping her fan, she would be performing a miracle. It is, therefore, idle to suppose she would drop it on purpose, particularly as it was one of those delicate affairs, of silk and ivory, which contact with the veranda could in no wise improve.

As a matter of truth, when the time came, it was her handkerchief, and not her fan, she dropped.

Mr. Prince, discerning its first flutter as it left her hand, shot out of his chair like a rocket.

"Allow me," he said.

"Thank you so much," said the lady, ac-

cepting her property with apparent gratitude. "It's a beautiful night, isn't it?"

"Ripping! Simply ripping!" Mr. Prince agreed, drawing up his chair.

"You've thrown away your cigarette. I'm sorry you did that."

"I *would* like to smoke, if you don't mind," said Mr. Prince, producing his gold case.

"Oh, you men — how I envy you!"

"Do you really?"

"I do, indeed."

"Oh, I don't know! There are certain advantages. But we can't wear pretty gowns — and jewelry."

"You have so much freedom."

"It doesn't do us much good," Mr. Prince declared gloomily; "some one is always getting the best of us."

"Are you unhappy, too?" asked the lady.

"Er — well — er — not exactly."

"A hidden sorrow, perhaps."

"Yes, that's it," said Mr. Prince.

"I, too, have known sorrow," said the lady.

"A deuced sorrowful thing, sorrow," Mr.

Prince replied uneasily. "I'm fond of jewelry, though," he added tactfully.

"I'd trade all my jewels — all — for happiness."

"By George! Would you?"

"Yes, I would," said the lady, a little impatiently.

"Would you trade them for anything else?" asked Mr. Prince.

"I might," said the lady, somewhat doubtfully.

"I wouldn't want them all, of course."

"Well, I should hope not! If you knew what trouble I had getting this sapphire bracelet of mine."

"I can guess," Mr. Prince hinted darkly.

"No you can't, not in a thousand years."

"Anyway, it's the bracelet I want."

"I must say I like your nerve," said the lady.

"I'm sorry if I've offended you," said Mr. Prince. "I didn't mean to; I didn't, honestly."

"We'll let it pass this once," said the lady.

"I'm really in earnest about the bracelet."

"You seem to be," the lady replied suspi-

ciously. "I don't know what your game is, young man, but I give it to you straight; there's nothing doing."

"That," said Mr. Prince, "is for you to decide. I have an offer to make that may interest you; at least, there can be no harm in your listening to it. And I think it will be to your advantage, greatly to your advantage, to hear what I have to say."

What arguments Mr. Prince now presented, it would be difficult to state. He was, naturally, above threatening a lady. But there are other methods which may be adopted, even against ladies; and the lady, in this case, was plainly an adventuress. Then, too, she loved liberty. Had she not said so, herself? And perhaps the hidden sorrow she had referred to was the uglier sorrow of remorse? She had admitted, also, encountering great difficulty in acquiring the bracelet. Was not this admission more or less incriminating?

Mr. Prince bent to the task before him. It wasn't an easy task, for the lady, at first, proved quite obdurate. But as constant dripping wears away a stone, so was the

lady's obduracy worn away by the insistent Mr. Prince; from being adamant, she became difficult, then merely unreasonable. Having reached this stage, Mr. Prince saw it would be useless to attempt to go farther; she would never be reasonable, he decided. So, letting well enough alone, he now proceeded along more familiar lines. He would do this, if the lady would do that. No? Perhaps she would agree to this, then? She wouldn't? Pray, what would she agree to? It ended in the lady making her own terms.

Mr. Prince was, however, not at all cast down by her ruling in the case. A definite understanding had been reached, and that was a great deal. Besides, he had succeeded in what he had set out to accomplish. He had been deucedly diplomatic, too, for he had not even suggested to the lady that she might have stolen the bracelet. Indeed, there had been no scene of any description, which was another cause for congratulation, for there might so easily have been a deucedly disagreeable scene.

Mr. Prince rose, threw away his ciga-

rette, and bestowed a friendly smile on his late antagonist.

"Leaving?" asked the lady.

"Yes, I think I'll go in now. Good-night."

The lady followed him with her eyes till he disappeared through the door leading into the hotel.

"I'd give a dollar to know what that kid is up to," she said to herself. "He's certainly a queer one."

CHAPTER VI

IN the hotel parlor, a piano, sadly out of tune, was being played by a sallow-faced young man with dreamy eyes. He played rather well, Mr. Prince thought. But the young man's audience evidently did not think so, for they were, even now, insisting that he give up his place to "Sadie." After a proper display of reluctance, Sadie allowed herself to be led to the piano, where she plunged, with a splendid splash, into a raging torrent of ragtime.

"Now, that's what I call music," said a stout matron. "I wish my Mary could play like that."

"Sadie certainly can play," agreed her companion. "I never knew anybody that could get more out of a piano."

Although Sadie was doing her valiant

best to drown all conversation, the sallow-faced young man couldn't help overhearing these remarks. He had been deprived of his place at the piano for rendering a Chopin prelude. Smiling sardonically, he murmured something that had to do with pearls and swine.

It must be confessed, however, that Mr. Prince saw nothing inimical to America's musical future in the change of programme. Indeed, he rather enjoyed Sadie's spirited performance. Besides, just at present, he was in a quandary as to what he should do next.

From his place outside the parlor door, Mr. Prince reviewed the past, and tried to imagine the future. Life was singularly like a game of bridge, he decided. Having declared trumps, he had already succeeded in taking one trick by playing the knave; but in order to capture the queen, he must finesse with caution. After studying his cards most carefully, Mr. Prince rose, and sought the hotel clerk, whom he found reading a magazine six months old behind the counter in the office.

"Sorry to disturb you," he said, "but when is the next train for New York?"

"To-morrow morning at seven."

"Isn't there one before that?"

"I'm afraid not," said the clerk. "There are plenty of trains, you know, but very few of them stop at our station. Were you thinking of leaving to-night?"

"I find I've got to be in New York early to-morrow morning," Mr. Prince confided. "Surely there's some train somewhere."

"How about your automobile? You could get there in that, couldn't you?"

"Y-es, I could; but I'd lose my way, like as not. Besides, I shouldn't care to drive all night, after the driving I've done to-day."

"What kind of a car have you?" asked the clerk.

"It's a corker!" Mr. Prince declared enthusiastically.

"I mean what make is it?"

"It's a Fiat, this year's model; six cylinders, four speeds, two direct drives. By George, but she can go! And does," Mr. Prince added reminiscently. "But, I say, what has that got to do with it?"

"I was thinking you might get some one to drive for you. There's a garage in the village that employs two or three pretty good men."

"That's not a bad idea!" exclaimed Mr. Prince. "But he's got to be an experienced driver, and thoroughly familiar with the car, you understand."

"Sure," said the clerk, "I understand perfectly. Perhaps you'd better do the telephoning yourself."

When Mr. Prince emerged from the glass-covered box in which the telephone was situated, he was smiling cheerfully.

"I've got one," he announced. "He's coming right over on a motor cycle."

"Guess I'd better get busy, and send for your bag," said the clerk. "I'll not charge you anything for the room. Dinner's seventy-five cents."

Mr. Prince eyed the clerk thoughtfully. No, he didn't seem the kind to be offended by a — Drawing a leather case from his pocket, he examined it anxiously. By Jove! There was nothing in it but a two-dollar bill! And he had meant to give the

chambermaid who had shown him to his room a thundering big tip. He'd spent an awful lot of money since sunrise. But there was plenty more where it had come from — oh, rather! Besides, he was almost sure to be passing this way again, and, in that event, neither the clerk nor the chambermaid would have any cause for complaint.

A series of irregular explosions announcing the approach of a motor cycle, Mr. Prince paid for his dinner, collected what was left of his two-dollar bill, and, requesting that his bag be sent out to his car, hastened to the veranda to meet his new chauffeur.

"Are you the man from the garage?" he asked, as the motor cycle, with a final cough, came to a stop.

"That's me. Was it you that sent for a chauffeur?"

"Yes. You are sure you can drive a Fiat?"

"Can I drive a Fiat? Well, just you watch me."

"And you know the road to New York?"

"With my eyes shut," declared the new

chauffeur. "I like driving at night — no constables to bother you."

"Yes," said Mr. Prince, "it's bully, isn't it?"

"It's a peach of a night for a run, all right, all right. My name's Bill. What's yours?"

"Prince — Morton Prince."

"Are you starting soon, Mr. Prince?"

"At once. We might as well go over to the car."

"I'll wheel my motor cycle over to the barn," said Bill. "Be with you in a jiffy."

There was something very pleasing about Bill, Mr. Prince decided. He was young, and strong, and looked thoroughly competent; and he had a frank, honest, boyish face.

The lady with the henna-colored hair was still sitting on the veranda. And now, as Mr. Prince passed her at some distance, on his way to his car, she called to him.

"You weren't leaving without saying good-by, were you?" she demanded.

"I — er — I don't think so," Mr. Prince replied.

"I should hope not!"

"Well — er — good-by."

"Wait a minute," said the lady. "Are you *the* Morton Prince?"

"I'm blessed if I know. Why?"

"Because if you are, I wish I'd known it sooner."

"I'm sure I'm not."

"I'll bet anything you are," said the lady. "I've read about you in the papers lots of times; you play polo, and are a great swell."

"You shouldn't believe everything you read in the papers," said Mr. Prince.

"And you're richer than mud."

"Richer than some mud, perhaps. But what has that got to do with it?"

"Nothing. Only it would have had if I'd known it half an hour ago," said the lady. "Anyway, I'll keep an eye on you."

"Please don't bother," said Mr. Prince.

"No bother at all," said the lady.

"Er — good-by," said Mr. Prince.

"Well, if that ain't just my luck," sighed the lady, as Mr. Prince disappeared round the corner of the hotel. "I had him between my thumb and finger, and I let him

get away. But how was I to know he was Morton Prince?"

For the first hour of the ride, Mr. Prince kept awake; then, satisfied that Bill was not only competent to run the car, but could drive quite as well as he could himself, Mr. Prince ordered him to stop.

"I'm uncommonly sleepy," he explained, as Bill, somewhat wonderingly, applied both brakes, "and I'm afraid to go to sleep, for fear I'll fall out."

"Too bad we haven't a tonneau," said Bill.

"I was thinking you might tie me in with the tow rope."

A series of loops and knots, and Mr. Prince was tied securely in his seat.

"I guess you haven't got any confidence in me," said Bill, with a joyous grin.

"None at all," replied Mr. Prince. "The fact is, Bill, your reckless driving has frightened me so, I don't dare keep awake."

CHAPTER VII

ARRIVING in New York about half-past two in the morning, Mr. Prince borrowed enough money at his garage to provide supper and a night's lodging for Bill; then, letting himself into his apartment, promptly went to bed. He slept till eleven, so it was not till early afternoon that he could give his attention to the important problem of locating Miss Randolph's place of residence.

There were, he found, eight Robert Alexanders in the telephone book; one of these lived on Madison Avenue. Very well, he would try that number first.

"Is Mrs. Robert Alexander at home?" Mr. Prince asked of a faint, far-away voice.

"She's in her heavenly home, if that's what you mean," the voice replied.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" said Mr. Prince. "I — er — er — Good-by.

"Now, that was dashed awkward! I hope I didn't hurt anybody's feelings," thought Mr. Prince. "Here goes for the next number, anyway. I'm bound to hit it right sometime."

The next Mrs. Robert Alexander *was* at home.

"Who is it wants her, please?"

"It's — er — What I really want to know is — There are so many Mrs. Robert Alexanders in the book, you see, and I'm looking for a friend — that is, a friend of a friend who was at a little hotel in New Jersey a day or two ago. Is this the Mrs. Alexander?"

"No, it ain't," said a cross voice.

Mr. Prince had no trouble in talking to the next Mrs. Alexander, for she answered the telephone in person.

"Yes, this is Mrs. Alexander," she said. "Who wants me?"

"I do," said Mr. Prince.

"Oh, hullo! Wait a minute."

"I wonder who the deuce she imagines I

am," thought Mr. Prince, feeling rather uncomfortable.

"I closed the door into the hall," explained the voice at the other end of the wire. "Where have you been all this time, you bad boy?"

"Er — er — Where have you been?" replied the startled Mr. Prince.

"I've been in town for a whole week, and I'm leaving to-morrow for Tuxedo. Can't you arrange —"

"I'm awfully sorry, but I can't possibly."

"Why! Why! You mean you refuse?"

"I — er — I'm quite sure there must be some mistake."

"A most natural mistake, on my part; but, believe me, one that will hardly occur again, Mr. ——"

"Don't say it," implored Mr. Prince. "I'm somebody else. I — I —"

A faint click announcing that the lady to whom he was endeavoring to explain had hung up her receiver, Mr. Prince followed her example.

"By Jove," he thought, "this is awful!

I suppose there's no great harm done, but just the same I'm glad I didn't look at her address."

Half closing his eyes, Mr. Prince covered with a card that portion of the Alexander list to which he had already telephoned; then, taking down his receiver, tried a new number. This time, too, he changed his tactics.

"Is this Miss Randolph's place of residence?" he asked. "Miss Dorothy Randolph?"

"Yes. Do you wish to speak to her?"

"Y-es. That is, I'd like to speak to her, but —"

"Hold the phone, please."

"I say! I can't speak to her now — I —"

"I find she has gone out," Mr. Prince was informed a moment later. "Who shall I say rang her up."

"Mr.— er — er — er — er —"

"Mr. What?"

"Yes, that's it. Thank you so much. Good-by."

It would be hardly wise to do anything

that day, Mr. Prince decided. To-morrow morning, perhaps? At all events, he now knew where she lived, and that was something.

At four o'clock that afternoon, Mr. Prince drove his long, gray car past a certain house in a certain street; then, turning, he drove past it again. In appearance it wasn't a wonderful house in any way, yet it seemed to interest him.

"I wonder if I'll ever be allowed inside it," he thought. "And I wonder — Suppose you take the car now, Bill. We'll go through the Park, and out along the river to a place I know where we'll have tea, and talk things over."

"Another plate of toast, waiter. Have a cup of tea, Bill?"

"I've already had two, sir."

"Two is nothing when one is thirsty."

"I was thirsty," Bill admitted, whereupon Mr. Prince poured more tea; then, selecting a cigarette from his gold case, lighted it, and gazed dreamily across the Hudson.

"That's Fort Lee, ain't it?" asked Bill,

indicating a ferry slip and a huddle of houses on the New Jersey side.

"Yes, that's Fort Lee."

"Thought so. I was there once."

"Do you drink, Bill?"

"Nothing to speak of."

"The last chauffeur I had disgraced me by running into a hansom on Fifth Avenue."

"Was he loaded?"

"Well, he wasn't exactly sober."

"I'd cut out booze perpetual if I had a good job," said Bill.

"I was thinking you might suit me," said Mr. Prince, "though I hadn't considered engaging a chauffeur till autumn."

"If you'll take me, I'll suit you fine," Bill declared earnestly; "no joy rides, and no knocking down money on the side — that's me. I'd like to drive for you, Mr. Prince, and your car's a peach. I wouldn't have to wear a uniform, would I?"

"No, you wouldn't have to wear livery; just a quiet suit of gray, and black puttees."

"Them's the leather things you wear on your legs, ain't they?"

"Yes."

"Then it's settled," said Bill. "Only I don't believe there'll be much doing for me in winter with the car you got."

"Oh, I've another car! Perhaps you noticed it in the garage — a blue limousine?"

"Did I notice it? Say, I was all over that car this morning; it's foreign, and looks like a crackerjack."

"It is," Mr. Prince admitted, with some pride. "And I'll pay you a hundred a month and board you, or a hundred and fifty a month, and you can board yourself."

"I guess I'll take the hundred and fifty, if it's all the same to you."

"Then," said Mr. Prince, "if you're ready, we'll be off to a tailor's, and order you some clothes. You can go home to-morrow, if you like, and get your things; and, as I expect to be at the Lake View Hotel in a day or two, you might as well take the car, and have it there for me when I arrive. Is that satisfactory?"

"Mr. Prince," said Bill, with a hint of emotion in his voice, "I would almost die for you, and that's the truth."

Mr. Prince wondered what his man would

think of Bill. He would never know, of course; he never knew what Hicks thought about anything. Not that he cared to know. Indeed, it would have annoyed him to look on any one so impersonal and British as other than a convenient piece of furniture. But Bill was different; Bill was a real human being.

"I'm more of a human being myself than I was day before yesterday," Mr. Prince decided. "Why, day before yesterday all I thought of was motor cars, and polo, and golf, and sailing! And now — and now — Why, now, all I think of is seeing *her* again. If I only knew when I would see her again!"

That evening Mr. Prince dined at his favorite club, where his presence created some surprise among such friends as had been told of his intention to play in the Kenwood golf tournament. That he refused to make a fourth at bridge after dinner was also commented upon. It would have occasioned even more surprise, however, if his friends, who believed he had left the club, could have seen him in the library, a dictionary at his

elbow, a pen in his hand. For, behold, Mr. Prince was writing a letter.

It must have been a difficult letter to write, for it took at least three hours to complete it. Still, it must not be inferred that it was altogether an unpleasant task, for he smiled not infrequently. And the first time he referred to the dictionary, he almost laughed aloud.

There are, doubtless, many amusing things in a dictionary, if one knows where to look for them. Mr. Prince had evidently found one of these.

"By George," he murmured, "there *are* two p's in sapphire, after all!"

CHAPTER VIII

MISS DOROTHY RANDOLPH was thinking of — oh, a hundred things. Not all at once, to be sure; but it was evident that certain thoughts ruled in pleasant majority, for even when she frowned smiles lingered in the corners of her mouth. Here she was, home again, and in the midst of packing for the fortnight to be spent with the Archer Grants at Narragansett Pier; truly a delightful occupation. Then, too, the week at that dreary little Lake View Hotel was, at last, ended. What a week! And what a nuisance that Aunt Harriet insisted on spending a week there every summer! Fifteen years ago, it might have been as charming as Aunt Harriet pictured it, but now nobody went there save Aunt Harriet — and Aunt Harriet's niece.

"I suppose it's a habit," Aunt Harriet's niece decided, "and she has to go to that wretched little hotel every June, just as Mary Patterson has to go North every August to escape hay fever. Just the same, she's a darling!"

Miss Randolph smiled tenderly, frowned a little, then smiled again, this time half-dreamily, half-reluctantly; she was now thinking of the young man she had found asleep in her hammock one afternoon — years ago, it seemed. Could it be possible it was only day before yesterday? He had been such an agreeably stupid young man, and so amusing in his deceit. He had evidently been rather pleased with himself, too. Well, he probably wasn't so pleased now.

"I wonder," said Miss Randolph to herself, "I wonder how long he waited for me at the boathouse. And I wonder — But, of course, I'll never see him again."

Dismissing the agreeable stupid Mr. Prince from her mind, she turned to the maid, who had been, all this while, busily engaged in packing a large trunk which stood in the center of the room, a bedroom.

"I think that will do for this morning, Walker."

"Very well, Miss Dorothy," said the maid, rising from her knees.

"And, Walker."

"Yes, Miss Dorothy."

"Please tell Saunders I'll have my lunch up here."

Aunt Harriet had left the night before to visit a cousin who possessed a cottage on the shore of Lake George; Uncle Robert, her husband, was, at this moment, playing a morning rubber of bridge on the deck of a friend's yacht, somewhere off the coast of Maine; so, save for the servants, Miss Randolph was quite alone in her uncle's house, which, though pleasantly situated on East Sixty-fourth Street, a few steps from Fifth Avenue, was not now particularly attractive within doors; upstairs, familiar rugs were missing, and downstairs, furniture, huddled in forlorn groups, wore the white swaddling clothes of summer. Still, it was much better to keep the house open through the summer than to go to a hotel when one came to town. Besides, Uncle Robert didn't own a country

house — he didn't want to be bothered with one — and the servants had to have some place to stay.

"We'll finish the packing about four, and then I'll go down to Cousin Julia's for tea," Miss Randolph decided. "And maybe she'll ask me to dinner."

A messenger boy, small in stature but large in importance, stepped from a Fifth Avenue 'bus, tilted his cap a bit more rakishly over his left eye; then, glancing at the address written on the small package he carried, proceeded toward his destination at a pace not likely to disturb the traditions of his profession. Reaching the house he sought, he swaggered up the steps and rang the bell.

"Say, pet, was you asleep?" he asked as, after some delay, the door was opened by a man, evidently a butler.

"When you got packages for this house, you deliver 'em at the kitchen door," said the man.

"When I got a bunch of spinach, I will. But dis is a package fer a loidy, see?"

"Well, you give it here, and be off with you."

"Quit yer sneezin', pet. You don't get no package till you signs for it."

The package having been exchanged for the butler's signature, the boy bestowed a parting word of advice, descended the steps, and sauntered, whistling, toward the Avenue.

Miss Randolph, seated near an open window overlooking the little garden at the rear of the house, was eating an iced grape-fruit when Walker appeared with a package.

"Something for me, Walker?"

"Yes, Miss Dorothy."

"Give it to me, please."

The moment Walker withdrew, Miss Randolph inspected the package carefully, weighing it in her hand.

"I wonder what it contains," she thought. "It's small, and light, and certainly I am not familiar with the handwriting of the address."

The salad on the tray before her looked most tempting; Jean's hot biscuits were always good. But she really must open the package.

Having freed it of its wrapping of white

WHAT AN EXASPERATING YOUNG MAN TO STEAL THE BRACELET AND SEND IT TO HER!

paper, she now held a gray box in her hand; and the box contained an envelope bearing her name, and a great quantity of tissue paper. Perhaps there was something beside tissue paper under the envelope? There was; something hard, and round, and — Goodness gracious! Was she dreaming? Miss Randolph, now the most surprised young woman in New York, gazed with unbelieving eyes at —

Why, this was dreadful! It was unheard of! It was outrageous! It was even worse, for it could have happened in but one way. How cowardly of him to have placed her in such a position! She was now — yes, of course, she was — a receiver of stolen property, for how else could he have acquired the bracelet? What a little idiot she had been to tell a strange young man she had been robbed of a bracelet, when she hadn't! What a simpleton she had been to describe a real bracelet, worn by a woman — such a woman — at the hotel! What an exasperating young man to steal the bracelet and send it to her! And now, what would she do? And what would the woman do?

And what did the young man have to say for himself? Laying the sapphire bracelet on the tray before her, she tore open the envelope, and read:

Miss Dorothy Randolph,
Care of Robert Alexander, Esq.,
—— E. 64th Street, City.

DEAR MISS RANDOLPH: When you intrusted me with the pleasing, if difficult, task of recovering your sapphire bracelet, I did not expect to be able to return it to you so soon. Indeed, when you failed to keep your appointment with me at the boathouse, I was even — professionally, of course — a little discouraged, for I could not read in your absence anything favorable to the case.

As it happened, however, your leaving by the five o'clock train that afternoon was little short of an inspiration, for, noting your absence, the culprit was reckless enough to wear your bracelet that evening at dinner.

Though, naturally, I encountered many difficulties, I will not go into details as to how I finally secured the bracelet. One often has to do unpleasant things in my profession, and confronting guilty members of the weaker, if more stubborn, sex is always distasteful to a man possessing high ideals and an unswerving loyalty and devotion, which I need hardly add I possess in full measure.

I will not say I did not threaten the culprit; advantages must ever be pressed before results can be obtained. But I am glad to be able to tell you that the culprit will not, in this instance, at least,

serve a term in prison. Therefore, you need not, as it so often happens, feel that the joy of recovering your bracelet is dimmed by the thought of a wretched woman crouching disconsolately behind prison bars.

In closing, will you permit me to tell you, as a detective of wide experience and some little fame, that I have not only enjoyed solving the mystery with which you so kindly provided me, but feel a real esteem and admiration for yourself?

Respectfully yours,

MORTON PRINCE, Detective.

P. S.— Bill for services rendered will be sent to you at end of quarter.

From having been the most surprised young woman in New York, Miss Randolph now became the most indignant. Such insolence! Such effrontery! Such — such — Was ever a girl placed in a more mortifying position? True, she was, in a manner, responsible for being in such a position. But did that make it less mortifying? On the contrary, it made it more mortifying, if anything.

How was she to know that a young man could be so stupid as to recover a bracelet that wasn't stolen — and send it to her. How had he learned where to send it, by the way? And how dared he carry on this mas-

querade of being a detective when he must have known he hadn't deceived her? It was insulting for him to suppose he had deceived her, even for a minute. Perhaps this was his method of being revenged? If so, it showed an evil, vindictive spirit; it was neither fair nor credible that an innocent adventure should end so seriously.

She had thought of Mr. Morton Prince as being an agreeably stupid young man; he was, it seemed, disagreeably clever. Or was he merely disagreeable? And how on earth had he managed to coerce the lady with the peculiar hair into giving up her bracelet? Could it be she had actually stolen it from some one else? But that was most unlikely. Yet there it was on the table before her, its sapphires gleaming wickedly.

And now, what was she to do? The bracelet must be returned to its owner at once. But how? She would send it back to that unspeakable Mr. Prince, only he had been most careful not to add his address to the outrageous letter he had written her. Of course, if he really believed it was her bracelet, and that it had been stolen — But

a man guilty of saying he was a detective when he wasn't, would be capable of 'most anything. Besides, the method he had adopted in sending it to her was highly suspicious. Miss Randolph now re-read Mr. Prince's suspicious letter, acquiring little from it beyond an added color to her cheeks and an increased look of anger in her eyes.

"It is a letter such as no gentleman would write," she decided scornfully; "that is, unless he were in — But that is too absurd!"

Yet he had had the temerity to describe himself as a man possessing high ideals, and an unswerving loyalty and devotion. And he had ended his letter by declaring he felt a real esteem and admiration for her.

"I honestly believe he did admire me," she told herself. "Not that that excuses him. Still, when a man admires a girl, he is apt to be — How I hate him! I hope I'll never see him again as long as I live! And it's very likely I never shall," she added, with something not unlike a sigh.

Having settled this interesting question of a future meeting with Mr. Prince, she dis-

missed him peremptorily from her mind. So, if he refused to remain dismissed, it was certainly not her fault. Besides, a girl is always at liberty to think of a man she hates. And, of course, there could be no doubt that Miss Randolph hated Mr. Prince. Had she not said so herself?

And now to decide a more vexing question: how to return the bracelet. She couldn't send it direct to its owner, for the reason that she didn't know her name. In a little hotel, one is apt to learn the names of all the guests — in time. But the lady with the queer-colored hair had only arrived the day before she and Aunt Harriet had left for New York. She might send it to the clerk of the hotel, with a note of explanation. But that would be embarrassing, unless it were sent anonymously, and certainly she was not one to write an anonymous letter.

It was evident, then — alas, too evident! — that she must return the bracelet in person. And, since it is always best to perform unpleasant duties at once, she would leave — yes, she would leave for the Lake View Hotel that very afternoon. The two-

o'clock train would get her there shortly after seven; she would take Walker with her — no, she wouldn't, either. It would be making a tiresome trip, on a tiresome errand. But there was one thing in her favor: that impossible Mr. Prince was undoubtedly in New York, and by going to the Lake View Hotel at once, all chance of encounter with him would be eliminated. Yes, she would go that afternoon.

Having reached this important decision, the anger and resentment she had felt toward Mr. Prince gave place to a grudging admiration; she couldn't help admiring him just a little bit. Not every man, having taken the rôle of detective at a moment's notice, could have played it so spiritedly, she was sure. True, his deceit had been as highly colored as a magic-lantern slide, and quite as transparent; but, in succeeding in what he had agreed to do, he had, in a manner, accomplished a miracle, and one didn't meet young men every day who could work miracles.

The worst of it was, he would probably never know what he really had done. Im-

agine his surprise on being informed that he had recovered a sapphire bracelet that had never been stolen for a girl who had never owned one. Truly, he was a most original detective. Of course, his success — if one could call it that — had been due to a series of inspired blunders. Still, they were amusing blunders. And the bracelet was really beautiful, the kind of bracelet she liked best; and she had always loved sapphires. There could be no harm in seeing how it would look on her wrist.

It looked uncommonly well there, and was so light, and pretty, and pleasant to wear! If it were hers, she would wear it often.

But it wasn't hers. Moreover, in its temporary possession lay the necessity of making a tiresome trip that afternoon to a tiresome hotel; and there would be a tiresome explanation to make to a tiresome woman with extraordinary hair. What on earth could she tell the woman, anyway? But she wouldn't worry about that, now; there would be five hours on the train in which to think of something plausible to say. Slipping the bracelet over her hand, she laid it in its box,

then sighed dispiritedly; Mr. Prince's idiocy was troubling her again.

It would be such a comfort to point out to him what a really appalling thing he had done, and that comfort was forever denied her; for, in the first place, she could never do this without incriminating herself, and, in the second place, she would probably never see him again. Naturally, she never wanted to see him again. Yet it seemed too bad that he should go down to the grave in ignorance of what he had done. Also, there would be a certain pleasure in proving to him that he was very stupid, and putting him in his place generally. If ever a young man needed disciplining, Mr. Prince was that young man; without this discipline, he would go on growing more self-satisfied every day. The thought was infuriating.

Miss Randolph resolved if she ever did meet Mr. Prince again, she would deal with him according to his deserts. She almost hoped he was — well, just the least bit attracted toward her, for that would make his subjugation so much the easier. Not that she viewed him as a possible — Oh, dear, no!

But she felt she would sleep better, and the world would be a happier place, if she could pay him out in some way. As matters stood, he was distinctly ahead in the foolish, extravagant game they had played, and for him to occupy this leading position indefinitely was something no girl with an ounce of spirit could willingly permit. At whatever pains, she must secure his fitting humiliation.

"I can't for the life of me see how it can be done, but I simply must get even with him," she decided.

Having reached this very human decision, she placed the gray box containing the sapphire bracelet in a small hand bag, rang for Walker, then, telephoning, ordered a taxicab to be at the house at a quarter past one. Of course, she would only stop at the Lake View Hotel one night, and, of course, she would see no one there whom she knew. Still, there was no harm in taking an extra gown. Some one had intimated once that blue might be becoming to her, and she had a heavenly blue organdie.

It was idle to suppose he would be there to see it. But it was always best to go pre-

pared for emergencies. Besides, one never could tell what amateur detectives might be doing, or where they might not be. Oh, never!

CHAPTER IX

AS a train was leaving the station at Jersey City, a young man, very much out of breath, swung himself aboard, and entered the buffet car.

"A deuced narrow shave, that," he confided to the negro who took his bag. "Bring me a pint of Apollinaris, please. And, boy!"

"Yeh-sah."

"Get me a seat in the parlor car, will you? Here's my ticket, and here's five dollars."

"Yeh-sah. In a minute, sah."

Left to himself, the young man looked about him. Satisfied there was no one whom he knew in the car, he now lighted a cigarette.

"I'm blessed if I know why I'm here," he thought half-impatiently. "There's little to be gained by going to-day; to-morrow

would have done quite as well, and would have saved me all this hurry. On the whole, though, perhaps it was wiser to go to-day; she'll send the bracelet to that woman as quick as ever she can, and there's no harm in being on hand when it arrives. I don't want the bracelet, but I'm dashed if I'm going to let that woman have it. She'll probably try and hang on to it, but I'll get it from her, one way or another, just as sure as my name's Morton Prince!"

For those who love color, the New Jersey landscape, as seen from a car window, is most satisfying, for, planted at convenient distances on either side of the track, immense signs proclaim in vivid greens, and reds, and blues, and with easy alliteration, the superiority of such excellent commercial products as Kornblum's Korrect Klothes, Breedin's Buttercup Brandy, Solomon's Sanitary Shoes in Salutary Shapes. Moreover, a poet possessed of the talent for reading these signs aright would speak of them as feathers from the Great American Eagle, and would tell you, in all sincerity, that their vivid coloring

was but the echo of that extraordinary bird's scream.

From his seat in the parlor car, Mr. Prince gazed through a window. Being no poet, however, the huge painted signs he saw did little more for him than make him a trifle dizzy.

"Confounded nuisance, this going places in trains!" he reflected. "I wish — By George!"

Though Mr. Prince leaned forward eagerly, he was not done with reflections, for there happened to be a small mirror set, panel-wise, beside the window. And in that mirror he had caught — But, no, it couldn't be.

If she would only turn her head again! No. Yes. No. There! By George, it *was!* There could be no manner of doubt: it was the girl.

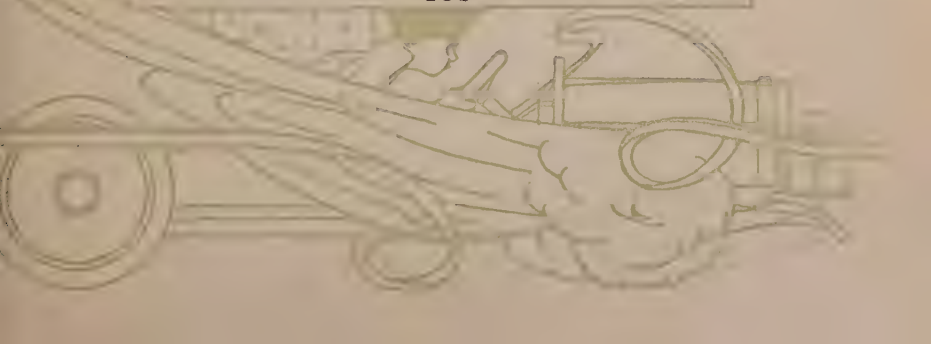
She was reading a magazine, and her back was toward the door by which he had entered; the chair in which she sat was farther down the aisle on the opposite side of the car, so, of course, he had not passed her. It was very probable, then, that she had not seen

him enter, and was quite unaware of his presence.

"I wonder," thought Mr. Prince, "if she'd be angry of I were to speak to her. Why shouldn't I speak to her? Am I not a detective, and haven't I just rendered her great service?"

While this sounded plausible, it was, alas, as Mr. Prince realized only too well, strictly untrue; he was not a detective, and instead of rendering Miss Randolph a service, he had probably caused her great annoyance. And she might imagine he was following her. Yet it would be worse than stupid; it would be criminal not to press the advantage fate so kindly offered. Besides, he had rather the best of her in that it was almost certain she still believed him to have acted in good faith in returning the bracelet; she simply couldn't have guessed he had known it wasn't hers. This being the case, she wouldn't dare appear other than grateful.

"If I do speak to her, she will probably begin by thanking the detective, and end by snubbing me," Mr. Prince prophesied gloomily. "And I'm hanged if I wouldn't



deserve it! Just the same, I'm going to speak to her; I've simply got to, that's all there is to it."

It is, perhaps, to his credit that it took Mr. Prince at least ten minutes to find the courage necessary to the fulfilment of his resolve; he counted the people in the car — six, including himself. Very good. He adjusted his tie, smoothed his hair with his fingers, glanced at his watch; he glanced at his watch, smoothed his hair, adjusted his tie. By George, he *would* speak to her! Drawing a handkerchief from his pocket, he now flicked some imaginary dust from his shoes; he fingered his tie again. His confounded hair must need trimming; his confounded watch was ticking all-precious moments, and — By Jove, she had turned! She was looking at him! She was — yes, she was actually smiling at him!

"Dear me," said the mendacious Mr. Prince, "what a pleasant surprise! And to think we should have discovered each other at the same moment! Why, it's — it's extraordinary! May I sit down?"

"Please do."

"I can't be glad enough I happened to take this train."

"Did you say *happened?*"

"I believe I did; I — I —"

"I thought perhaps you might be trailing a criminal," said Miss Randolph. "Indeed, I had already made up my mind it was the man with the gray hair in chair number seven. Don't tell me I'm wrong."

"I won't," Mr. Prince replied cheerfully.

"We women rather pride ourselves on our intuition, you know."

"I don't blame you," said Mr. Prince.

"Then you *are* following the man with the gray hair?"

"Why bother about business?"

"Oh, if you do not wish to tell me!"

"I'd tell you anything," said Mr. Prince.

"Anything except what I wish to know, perhaps."

"Are you fond of motoring, Miss Randolph?"

"Are you trying to change the subject, Mr. Prince?"

"Er — no. And I jolly well couldn't if

I wanted to," Mr. Prince answered somewhat sulkily.

"Then it *is* the man with the gray hair whom you are following?"

"You've guessed it," said Mr. Prince. "And guessed wrong," he added under his breath.

"I'm glad you have confided in me, for I think I can help you. But first I want to thank you for returning the sapphire bracelet."

"Oh, that was nothing," Mr. Prince replied uneasily.

"And to pay you for your trouble."

Mr. Prince sat fascinated while Miss Randolph opened her hand bag, drew therefrom a gold purse, and proceeded to count out four one dollar bills.

"There!" she said, holding the bills toward him. "Please count them and see if they're right."

"But you weren't to pay me till the end of the quarter; I can't accept them now — I can't honestly!"

"I must insist on your taking them now."

"Please don't insist."

"BUT FIRST, I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR RETURNING THE SAPPHIRE BRACELET"

"Ah, I see; you are not content with so small a sum."

"It's the sum agreed upon, and I'm more than content with it. But I — I —"

"Then take it."

Realizing there was no way out of it, Mr. Prince accepted the four green bills, and, folding them carefully, placed them in the only pocket of his waistcoat that seemed to be anywhere near his heart.

"I never knew detectives were so reluctant to take money," said Miss Randolph.

"It's the inconvenience of the thing," Mr. Prince explained. "It upsets the — er — my bookkeeper to have money come in before it's due."

"I'm afraid I haven't fully expressed my thanks for the return of the bracelet."

"Were you really glad to get it?" asked Mr. Prince, intent on paying his late client out for having made him accept the four dollars.

"Doesn't that go without saying?"

"I'll wager you were surprised, though."

"I was surprised," Miss Randolph admitted. "I'm sure you'll forgive me for

saying it now that you have proved how capable you are; but, do you know, you impressed me at first as being a man utterly unqualified for your profession."

"How's that?" Mr. Prince demanded.

"You seemed to lack tact."

"I fancy I have as much as most."

"As most detectives, perhaps. But, after all, why should you need more?"

"I — er — I feel I need a lot more," Mr. Prince replied humbly. "What would you say, Miss Randolph — er — what would you say if I were to tell you I am not a detective?"

"I should agree with you."

"What?"

"That you needed more tact," Miss Randolph concluded evenly.

"There's only one thing I really need," Mr. Prince declared. "Can you guess what it is?"

"No, I can't," said Miss Randolph, "unless it's assurance."

"Oh, I say, that's unkind!"

"But isn't it true that you sometimes feel uncomfortable and not quite sure of yourself

when addressing people who are — well, a bit above you in station?"

"Er — perhaps I do. I hadn't noticed it."

"I've noticed it from the very start," said Miss Randolph. "Speaking of stations, has it occurred to you your quarry may try to give you the slip?"

"My quarry?"

"Yes, the man with the gray hair whom you are following. Do tell what he has done."

"Why, he — he's robbed a bank."

"Dear me! And he looks so gentle."

"It's the gentle criminals that are the most dangerous," said Mr. Prince, nodding his head wisely. "If I were to tell you —"

"I don't believe you'll have time," said the girl. "I heard him tell the porter he was getting off at the next station, and we're almost there."

Mr. Prince regarded the gray-haired criminal anxiously. He was undoubtedly preparing to leave the train at the next station.

"You'd better get your bag, and be on

the platform when he gets off," warned the girl. "Otherwise, you might lose him."

"I've a good notion to let him escape," said Mr. Prince.

"You mustn't think of it."

"He has a wife, and ten children."

"All the more reason he shouldn't escape. Think of the hundreds of wives and children and orphans he's robbed."

"I don't care; I'm going to let him escape."

"That," said the girl gravely, "would be very dishonorable, since you know him to be a dangerous criminal. And, of course, you wouldn't do anything dishonorable."

"No," said Mr. Prince, "of course not. That is — Oh, bother!"

"The train is stopping," said the girl. "You must make up your mind at once. I shall never speak to you again if you don't go," she added demurely.

"I hope you didn't think I seriously intended not going?" Mr. Prince replied, with some dignity.

"Oh, no! I was sure you would go from the very first."

"By George, I believe you! Good-afternoon, Miss Randolph."

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Prince, and good luck with your criminal. Before you go, would you mind opening my window?"

From the open window, it was possible to see Mr. Prince descend from the car. Miss Randolph watched him till he disappeared round the corner of a building; then, shutting the window, sank back in her chair, and opened a magazine wherein she read what must have been, judging from her frequent smiles, a most amusing story.

CHAPTER X

WHEN Mr. Prince stepped off the train behind the gray-haired man whom he had so slanderously described as a criminal, he was frankly out of humor with himself. Yet he could not help admiring the method by which Miss Randolph had got rid of him; she had been so adroit, and he had stepped into the trap she had laid so unsuspectingly!

"Serves me jolly well right for being so dashed stupid!" he told himself. "But how the deuce was I to know where she was leading me?"

And he had rather fancied himself at the time, had been even pleased by the picture he had drawn of the gray-haired criminal. Come to think of it, it was the girl who had drawn the picture; all he had done was to

sign his name to it. And in appending his signature, he had signed a warrant for his dismissal from — from heaven. It was plain, then, that there was but one thing to do; to return to heaven as quickly as possible; which meant, of course, that he must catch the next train for the Lake View Hotel. Or perhaps — By Jove, why hadn't he thought of it before!

When Mr. Prince had disappeared from Miss Randolph's sight, it had been round a corner of the station building; when he again appeared where she could have seen him had she been leaning out of an open window, it was at the other end of the station. Even then she might have missed him, for there were convenient trucks, laden with boxes, to obstruct her view. Using these trucks as a shield, Mr. Prince made, as rapidly as caution would permit, toward a certain platform very near the engine, arriving there just as the conductor gave the signal for the train to start. Then, by opening several doors, and journeying the length of several aisles, he found himself once more in the buffet car.

It was maddening that, with Miss Randolph so near, he could not go to her; but it was a jolly lot better to be where he was, than to be kicking his heels in a sleepy little village, waiting for the next train. Of course, he'd either have to ride past the Lake View Hotel station, or get off somewhere this side. He'd have the porter bring him a time-table.

"Do you know anything about this place?" Mr. Prince asked, pointing to the time-table.

"Yeh-sah."

"How large a place is it."

"It's quite a town, sah."

"Does it boast a garage?"

"It don't boast none, but it's got 'em. Oh, Lawd, yeh-sah!"

"How many miles this side of the Lake View Hotel is it?"

"'Bout eight miles, boss."

"And can you tell me the name of one of the garages?"

"'Deed I can, sah. It am the Pioneah."

"The Pioneer Garage? Good! Now get me a telegraph form, please."

A dollar bill having been pressed into his hand as a preface to the foregoing conversation, the porter was only too happy to oblige Mr. Prince.

"Heah's them fohms," he announced a moment later.

"And what direction is that?" asked Mr. Prince, pointing toward the window by which he sat.

"That's east, sah."

"Thank you."

Mr. Prince now turned his attention to composing a telegram which, when completed, read:

Pioneer Garage, Cloverdale, N. J.

Please have your fastest car at station to meet train due six thirty-five. Important. Will pay liberally. Look for me on east side of track.

MORTON PRINCE.

After handing this to the porter with instructions that it be wired from the next stopping place, Mr. Prince proceeded to congratulate himself; if all went well, he would arrive at the Lake View Hotel almost as soon as Miss Randolph. And, since her chair was on the west side of the train, he

could feel reasonably safe in alighting from the east side. He only hoped the Pioneer Garage would supply him with a fast car, and a good driver.

Mr. Prince now decided it might be well to think of dinner — not a real dinner, of course, for he dared not enter the dining-car. But his friend the porter would see that he got a plate of sandwiches from somewhere, and there were far worse dinners than a plate of sandwiches, and a pint of ale. Oh rather!

As the train neared Cloverdale, Mr. Prince grew more and more nervous. Supposing no motor car met him? Supposing Miss Randolph should be sitting by an east window in the dining-car, and should see him alight? But here was a far better supposing: supposing, since it took the 'bus ten minutes to make the trip from the station to the Lake View Hotel — supposing he should get there first, should be on the veranda when Miss Randolph arrived? That would be simply splendid! Followed by the obliging porter, Mr. Prince moved forward as far as

the baggage-car, where he took up his position on the lowest step leading from the east side of the platform.

The train was now entering the station. And there was a motor car near the track that looked like a perfect hummer.

"By George, this *is* luck!" thought Mr. Prince. "Now to make a run for it. I'm dashed if I don't believe I'll get there before she does, after all!"

Mr. Prince covered the few feet that separated him from the big blue touring car in no time. Flinging his bag into the tonneau, he followed it rapidly, and, spying a rug on the floor, proceeded to muffle his face in it.

"No use taking any chances," he told himself. "Here! What are you doing?"

Although this last question was addressed to the chauffeur in charge of the car, it was very evident what he was doing.

"I say," exclaimed Mr. Prince, "leave the rug alone, will you?"

"And I say you get out of there," retorted the chauffeur, pulling at the rug. "What in blazes are you doing in there, anyway?"

"I'm hiding from some one, you idiot!"

"Oh, you are, are you?"

"Yes, I am," snapped Mr. Prince. "And I advise you to start your engine, and take me where I want to go."

"You wasn't wanting to go to the police station, was you?"

"Certainly not."

"I thought as much," said the chauffeur.

"Look here," said Mr. Prince, "who the deuce are you?"

"It's none of your business who I am."

"I'll jolly soon make it my business!" declared the now thoroughly angry Mr. Prince. "I'll report you to your employer."

"Go to it," said the chauffeur.

"What's the row, Carter?" asked a deep bass voice.

"This young smart Aleck slid off the train, dived into the tonneau, sir, and covered himself with a rug. Guess he's trying to escape from the police."

"I'm not, either," said Mr. Prince, regarding with a speculative eye the important-looking man who had addressed the chauffeur as Carter. "I wired the Pioneer Garage to

have a car meet me here, and I supposed this was it. Is it? Or isn't it?"

"The car is mine," said the important-looking man. "It could hardly be mistaken for a livery car," he added pompously.

"It could, because it was," said Mr. Prince.

"Are you going to get out of there, or ain't you?" demanded the chauffeur.

"I wouldn't advise you to create a disturbance," said the important-looking man.

"I have no intention of creating a disturbance," Mr. Prince declared. "And, of course, I'll get out — at once."

"If you was really looking for an automobile from the Pioneer Garage," said the chauffeur, "there it is, over there."

Mr. Prince turned, and walked hurriedly in the direction toward which the chauffeur had pointed. Yes, there was an automobile. But what an automobile! He had wired for the fastest car in the shop, and they had sent him — Occasionally, in a moment of surprise, or disappointment, one conceives a simile so false as to seem almost inspired. Mr. Prince smiled bitterly.

"I'm dashed if they haven't sent me a bird-cage," he said.

Having delivered himself of this observation, Mr. Prince flew to his perch beside the driver. Then, with captive coil singing hoarsely to the uneven accompaniment of its single cylinder, the shabby, battered little bird-cage proceeded slowly on its way to the Lake View Hotel.

CHAPTER XI

IT is doubtful if the cat of song and story who ate the fabled and unfortunate canary felt — or looked — more complacent than Miss Randolph, after her adroit dismissal of Mr. Prince. True, he had got the best of her when he had sent her the sapphire bracelet. But now she had got the best of him. Oh, dear, yes! He had wanted most awfully to stay, and she had made him go; he had attempted to deceive her, and she had tripped him with the web of his own deceit; falsehood had come in at the door, and Mr. Prince had flown out of the window. Exit Mr. Prince.

Not that she held the white lies he had told against him: they had been far too useful to her. Still, it was just the least bit scandalous that such a good-looking young

man should stray so constantly from the highroad of truth. Perhaps this would be a lesson to him. In any event, it was refreshing to taste of the fruits of victory. And it was wonderfully pleasant to remember the wry face with which Mr. Prince had accepted the apples of discord she had thrust into his hand, if one could so refer to the four one-dollar bills she had given him. How he had hated to take them! And what an inspired moment it had been when she had realized the possibilities of the gray-haired passenger in chair number seven!

It now occurred to Miss Randolph that she might need another inspiration to assist her in returning the sapphire bracelet to its rightful owner. Supposing that extraordinary person should prove difficult, and demand an explanation. But why worry about it? Besides, since misfortunes never came singly, there could be no earthly reason why inspirations shouldn't travel in pairs.

"If I can have one inspiration, I can have another," she decided serenely. "And, moreover, I'll make it a point to have one."

Satisfied that the problem of approach-

ing the lady with the henna-colored hair would furnish its own solution, Miss Randolph settled herself more comfortably in her chair, and read a story in a magazine. It was one of those cheerful, pink-and-white stories containing a stalwart, handsome hero, and a heroine with a perfect nose who wore Paquin gowns — a story with a romantic first meeting, a Newport back-ground, and a wedding-bell finish. And the hero was — yes, he was — very like Mr. Prince.

It was pleasant, of course, to realize that fiction was, to some extent, patterned after life. Yet Miss Randolph couldn't help seeing that her own story was far more interesting. Not that she ever expected to see Mr. Prince again. It was scarcely credible, but she hoped she would see him again. Without meaning to be, he was such an amusing young man, and even in his stupid moments he had never been offensive; on the contrary, his stupidity was, perhaps, his most engaging quality, for beneath it lay a strata of fine sincerity which one couldn't help liking. And then, he was so obviously prepossessed of her.

Supposing she were a man who had met, in an unconventional way — Miss Randolph smiled to think how unconventional — a girl whom she fancied she might learn to — met a girl whom she wanted most awfully to meet again. Wouldn't she plan, and scheme, and contrive? Miss Randolph admitted she would do all three, only she would plan more cleverly. Or would she? Hadn't Mr. Prince done the cleverest thing possible in sending her the bracelet? How in the world had he managed to acquire it? From whom had he learned her address? And where had he been going when she had made him alight from the train?

Heretofore, in looking upon life, Miss Randolph's eyes had reflected little more than a mild enjoyment; but till this afternoon she had never made a young man — an exceedingly attractive and reluctant young man — alight from a train at a station miles from the place he had intended to alight. It was too delicious! Life held its golden moments, after all.

Experience having taught her that she was likely to get a far better dinner on the train

than at the Lake View Hotel, Miss Randolph entered the dining-car a little after six. It was too unearthly an hour really to dine, so she ordered a light supper, regarding it when it arrived with the indifference of one who eats from habit rather than from hunger. Half a grape fruit, and some slices of cold chicken. She had had chicken and grape fruit for lunch. How long ago it seemed! She remembered a fragment of poetry:

> We live in deeds, not years,
> In thoughts, not breaths,
> In feelings, not in figures on a dial;
> We should count time by heart throbs.

Yes, that was it; the afternoon, counted in heart throbs, was — But what nonsense!

On arriving at the hotel, Miss Randolph ascended at once to the room assigned her by the clerk.

"I didn't expect to see you back so soon," said the chambermaid. "Is Mrs. Alexander well?"

"Quite well, Katie."

"Is there anything you want?"

"I think not, thank you."

"It's a pleasure to do things for you, Miss Randolph."

"It is very nice of you to say that, and I shall tell you if —"

Miss Randolph paused, then smiled joyously. Why shouldn't Katie return the sapphire bracelet? To return it herself would not only involve a certain amount of embarrassing explanation, but the explanation, no matter how artfully conceived, could hardly fail to arouse suspicion. Then, too, for her to return a bracelet that Mr. Prince had acquired in a questionable manner would connect her most unpleasantly with the affair, while if she gave the bracelet to Katie, with instructions to return it with no explanations whatsoever, its rightful owner would naturally believe it had come direct from Mr. Prince. Yes, there could be no doubt of it, the inspiration for which she hoped had arrived at last.

Miss Randolph now opened her hand bag, and drew therefrom the gray box containing the bracelet.

"You can do me a great favor, if you will," she said.

"I'm real glad, honest I am, Miss Randolph."

"There's a lady stopping here, a lady with rather peculiar-looking reddish hair."

"That must be Mrs. Hardcastle. She ain't a lady, though; she's a —"

"To-day, about lunch-time," Miss Randolph interrupted hurriedly, "I discovered I had something that belonged to her."

"Something you took away from here by mistake?"

"My having it is the result of a mistake, Katie, so, of course, it must be returned to her. Still, I can't see why I should meet her, and enter into a long and tiresome explanation, especially since she doesn't know I have it."

"No need at all, Miss Randolph. She'll talk your arm off if you give her a chance."

"And, since when you give it to her she will have her property, I can think of no reason why my name should be mentioned at all."

"You can better believe I won't mention

it. I'll just hand her what you give me, and say, 'Here's something that belongs to you,' then fade away. And if she gets curious, and tries to pump me afterward, I'll tell her a story that'll make her hair curl. It gives me a pain the way she puts on airs. A girl in a hotel learns pretty quick to tell the difference between imitations and the real thing, Miss Randolph, and Mrs. Hardcastle ain't the real thing by a good deal. Why, the way she talks to us maids is something fierce! Just you give me what you got of hers, and I'll see that she gets it, all right."

A few moments later, the gray box containing the sapphire bracelet concealed in her blouse, Katie sailed blithely down the back stairs and disappeared in the servants' dining room. She would have her dinner first; plenty of time to give the box to that offensive Mrs. Hardcastle, afterward. Besides, she had been told there was no great hurry.

Feeling that a great weight had been lifted from her mind, or heart, or conscience, she didn't know which, Miss Randolph sighed contentedly, and walked to an open window. It was far too warm and beautiful to stay

indoors. Drawing a lace scarf across her shoulders, she made her way downstairs and out into the night. The path she chose led to the lake, and the moon, walking far overhead in her garden of stars, noticed this, and smiled.

CHAPTER XII

ACCORDING to the porter in the buffet car, the Lake View Hotel lay eight miles beyond the station at which Mr. Prince had elected to alight. This distance may have been correct, as the crow flies, but it must be remembered that the only resemblance Mr. Prince held to a crow in this instance was that he traveled in a bird-cage. Then, too, the man who drove the bird-cage insisted it was fourteen miles to the Lake View Hotel, and drivers of bird-cages are very apt to know what they are talking about.

The journey proved painful to Mr. Prince, who, grown used to flying through the country in his own fast car, had come to look on a speed of fifteen miles an hour on a level road as being practically the same thing as

standing still; nor could he see any merit in a bird-cage that took every hill on the first speed, and overheated in the process if the hill were long. So the wings of love beat against cruel bars, and the air was filled with feathers and with muttered words of discontent. And when, at last, the lights of the hotel were sighted, Mr. Prince felt he had aged greatly.

"By Jove," he said to himself, "that chap Rip Van Winkle was uncommonly lucky; he slept his twenty years, while I've spent mine traveling fourteen miles!" Which would lead one to believe that Mr. Prince, like Miss Randolph, had begun to count time by heart throbs.

As the little car chugged up to the hotel, a tall young man rose from his chair on the veranda and strolled over to inspect the new arrival, for he was interested in everything in the automobile world from a bird-cage to a Fiat.

"Looks like a single-cylinder Starbuck," he mused. "And Lordy, it's missing like it was kidnaped! Weak battery, I guess;

or maybe it's a — Well, I'll be jiggered! If it ain't Mr. Prince! And in a Starbuck, of all things!"

"Glad to see you, Bill," said Mr. Prince. "Take my bag, please, while I pay off this driver."

"I kind of looked for you on that seven o'clock train," said Bill a moment later. "Some class to them Starbucks — I don't think. Will you be wanting me this evening?"

"Not so far as I know. Is my car here, or at the garage?"

"It's out under the shed by the stable. I engaged a room for you, and your other gripsack is in it. Guess I'll hang around in case you do want me, if it's all the same to you."

"Just as you like, Bill."

After carrying Mr. Prince's bag into the hotel, Bill went back to his chair in a dark corner of the veranda, and, lighting his pipe, puffed away contentedly; his new employer was certainly a grand man to work for, the Fiat was a grand car, and one hundred and fifty dollars a month was a grand sum of

money. Aside from all this, Mr. Prince was a good comrade, as well.

"He ain't a bit stuck up, like some of them rich guys," Bill told himself approvingly. "Not on your tintype! He's the real goods, all right, all right!"

In the hotel, the "real goods" was greeted by the clerk like a long lost brother. It was curious, but men in a humbler station of life were usually delighted to see Mr. Prince; even his friends noticed this. "Morton always makes a hit with *hoi polloi,*" Jack Leighton had said one night at the club.

Mr. Prince, quite unaware that the clerk's greeting was more cordial than was generally extended to guests arriving at this particular hotel, responded to it with great sincerity.

"Dashed glad to see you again," he said. "My chauffeur told me he'd engaged a room for me. Did he register?"

"Yes, he registered," said the clerk. "He arrived yesterday afternoon with the car. I gave him a room in the attic."

Mr. Prince now studied the book in which

guests wrote their names. He was extremely pleased to see Miss Randolph's signature; he was almost as pleased to place his own directly under it. There was something intimate and satisfying in their names appearing so close together. Some day, if the fates were kind, her signature would be done away with to the delicious extent that hotel registers would bear this record: Mr. and Mrs. Morton Prince. Or would it be more proper to write, Morton Prince and wife? There were certain things a chap had to look into; next time he stopped at a big hotel he'd inspect the register, and learn which was right. In the meantime, he'd take a look about him and see if, by any happy chance, he could discover Miss Randolph. Leaving his bag to be sent to his room, Mr. Prince lighted a cigarette, and, with a friendly nod to the clerk, made for the veranda.

The veranda of the Lake View Hotel was really charming; holding no lights to blind the eyes, it was spacious to a degree, and certain portions of its long reach were screened with honeysuckle and wistaria. Avoiding a

group of men and girls, Mr. Prince walked almost the length of the veranda. No, she wasn't there. Perhaps she had retired for the night? Some one sat in shadow over yonder; but, alas, it was a man. Maybe he'd be fortunate enough to see her in the morning? Since he couldn't see her now, he'd sit down and think about her. As if he could help thinking about her! But it was sad that a night so fragrant with honeysuckle should be —

"Good-evening," said a voice.

"Er — good-evening," said Mr. Prince, rising hastily, "good-evening." Then, that being extended which he could not well ignore, he shook hands gravely with the lady with the henna-colored hair. This accomplished, the lady drew a chair very near his own, and, seating herself, commanded Mr. Prince to do likewise.

"Now this is what I call cozy," she said.

"It is, rather," agreed Mr. Prince, vaguely alarmed, yet undecided as to whether he could edge his chair away without seeming rude. With a sigh, he realized that he was fairly trapped.

"And I want to tell you I think you're a perfect duck."

"A what?"

"A perfect duck."

"There's — there's some mistake."

"Don't be a goose!"

"Is it — is it about the bracelet?"

"Of course it is, you stupid boy! Why didn't you return it yourself, dear Mr. Prince?"

"I — I don't know. That is — Did she give it to you herself?"

"How else could I be wearing it now?" asked the lady, waving her left hand before Mr. Prince's troubled eyes.

"Er — what did she tell you?"

"She didn't tell me anything," answered the lady. "All she said was: 'Here's something that belongs to you.'"

"Thank the Lord!" thought Mr. Prince. "I could never have forgiven myself if she had become involved in this dashed affair with this dashed woman."

"And when I asked her what was in the box, she as plain as told me it was none of my business."

"Bully for her!" said Mr. Prince.

"It wasn't bully at all," declared the lady, "it was just plain sass. And I'm thinking of having her discharged."

"Discharged?"

"Yes, discharged. This ain't the first time she's been cheeky. And the way she makes my bed is something fierce — sheets all wrinkles, and —"

"Makes your bed?" exclaimed Mr. Prince. "Who in the deuce are you talking about?"

"And who should I be talking about but the chambermaid you gave the bracelet to?"

Mr. Prince was silent; first from sheer relief, then from admiration of Miss Randolph's cleverness. "By Jove," he thought, "she has kept clear of this whole affair, and I'm no end grateful!"

"I never knew a gentleman to give a lady a present more graceful," continued his companion.

"Er — didn't you?"

"Do I look like a lady that would accept seven hundred dollars from a perfect stranger?"

"I — Of course not. You see, it's all a mistake."

"What's a mistake?" demanded the lady. "Didn't you tell that sassy chambermaid to give me the bracelet?"

"No, I didn't," said Mr. Prince. "And I'll be much obliged to you if you'll return it."

"Well, I guess not!"

"Look here," said Mr. Prince, "why do you suppose I gave you seven hundred dollars for a three hundred dollar bracelet if it wasn't that I wished to keep it?"

"I suppose you was kind of gone on me, if you want the truth," the lady replied brazenly.

"I'm not," said Mr. Prince.

"Anyway, I've got it, and, what's more, I intend to keep it."

"And I say you shall not," Mr. Prince declared, raising his voice in his excitement. "The bracelet is mine, and I mean to have it."

"Like to see you get it."

"I paid you seven hundred dollars for it, didn't I?"

"Yes. But you can't prove it."

"I can come jolly near proving it."

"Bah!" said the lady, snapping her fingers. "You can't prove anything, and I advise you not to try. Besides, what's seven hundred dollars to you?"

"It's the confounded principle of the thing; a chap doesn't like to be rooked of seven hundred dollars, or of seventy cents, for that matter."

"And a lady doesn't like to have a gentleman talk to her like you're talking to me."

"I'm sure I beg your pardon if I've been rude," said Mr. Prince. "Just the same, I want the bracelet."

"You can't have it."

"Then I'll take the seven hundred dollars."

"You'll take yourself off," said the lady. "If you don't, I'll tell the hotel clerk you insulted me."

"And I'll tell him you have my bracelet."

"Go tell him. There's plenty of people in the hotel that have seen me wearing it."

"Then I'll tell him you've seven hundred dollars of mine."

"You do it, and I'll sue you for breach of promise."

"What?" gasped Mr. Prince.

"I've a notion to do it, anyway."

"Why, this is — It's preposterous!"

"You go around telling people you gave me seven hundred dollars, and see if it's preposterous or not. Why should you be giving me money?"

"For the bracelet."

"A likely story," said the lady, "What would you be wanting with a bracelet? It's more likely you gave me the money to buy a trousseau."

Quite overwhelmed by this alarming and unlooked-for statement, Mr. Prince rose, stood speechless for a moment; then, turning on his heel, walked swiftly away, neither seeing nor caring where he went, for his eyes smarted from the dust of defeat, and his heart burned with anger. Round the corner of the hotel, across an open space, down a path — it was all one to him so long as each step carried him farther from that dreadful woman.

Sad to relate, that dreadful woman was

distinctly pleased with herself; three hundred dollar bracelets did not grow on every tree, and a clear profit of seven hundred dollars was never to be despised.

"I scared him pink, so I guess he won't bother me any more," she said to herself. "Fancy a kid like that thinking he could do Emma Hardcastle out of anything she's once got her fingers on. He must have bought that bracelet of me to give to some girl he's sweet on, and the maid who was to deliver it must have made a mistake. Yet he didn't seem surprised that I had it. I guess he really started to give it back to me, and then got cold feet. Anyway, I got it, and it'll take somebody with more nerve than Morton Prince to get it back."

In a shadowy corner of the veranda, not so far from where the lady with the henna-colored hair sat, a young man was engaged in unlacing his shoes. It was an unconventional thing to do, even under the cover of darkness, but perhaps the shoes were too tightly laced? No, there must have been a pebble in one of them — in both of them —

for now he held his shoes in his hand; he was tying their laces together; he had slipped the laces over his head, and the shoes hung from his neck. Was the young man quite insane?

He was on his feet, stealing softly toward a certain spot. He was directly behind the lady with the henna-colored hair. He had her by the wrist.

A short struggle, a scream of anger and alarm, and this highly unconventional young man leaped lightly over the veranda rail, and disappeared into the night, leaving the lady to announce hysterically to the audience attracted by her scream that she had been robbed of a valuable bracelet.

"Did you see the thief's face?" asked the hotel clerk anxiously.

"You can better believe I saw his face! He stole up on me in his stocking feet, and grabbed my wrist, and slipped off my bracelet just like that. And I don't know what kind of a hotel you call this where a lady can't even sit on the front porch without being robbed."

"Nothing like this ever happened here before," said the clerk.

"I should hope not! You send for the constable right away; do you hear?"

"I've already sent for him," said the clerk. "He only lives just beyond our gate."

"Well, when he comes you bring him straight to me. And clear these people away, will you?"

Left alone, the lady tossed her head angrily, and vowed vengeance.

"I didn't see his face, either," she confessed to herself, "but I'm blamed sure it was that low-down sneak of a Morton Prince. He must have climbed over the railing at the end of the porch. I'll teach him to steal bracelets. I'll have him arrested, and then make him pungle up something handsome before I'll agree not to appear against him. And I guess it ought to be worth a couple of thousand not to appear against him," she concluded more amiably.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN Mr. Prince had left the lady with the henna-colored hair, he had been far too indignant to notice where his steps were taking him, and therein the hand of fate is clearly indicated, for the path he followed led to the little pavilion at the edge of the lake, and in the pavilion he discovered the one of all the world in whom the night found its most pleasing expression. Mr. Prince was enchanted.

"Fancy finding you here," he said.

"I'm even more surprised than you," replied Miss Randolph, whose greatest surprise lay in realizing she wasn't at all surprised at seeing Mr. Prince. "I imagined your professional duties would detain you

longer. I hope your criminal didn't escape."

"Did you think I would let him escape after what you told me?" Mr. Prince asked reproachfully.

"After what I told you?"

"You said you'd never speak to me again if I let him get away."

"So I did. But don't you think you are a — a bit rash to come here?"

"I didn't dream you were here; I didn't, honestly."

"I mean, wasn't it rash of you to come to the hotel?"

Mr. Prince groaned. "I knew you'd think that," he said, "but I — I just couldn't help it. I was almost sure you were bound for this place when I saw you on the train. I suppose if I'd been — if I hadn't been — I haven't meant to intrude, or annoy you, really and truly I haven't."

"But you haven't intruded; you have been most considerate. I'm sure some detectives —"

"Miss Randolph," Mr. Prince said, with great solemnity, "I am not a detective."

"Not now, perhaps."

"I never was."

"Why do you tell me this?"

"I'm blessed if I know," Mr. Prince replied, "unless it is because I can't bear to deceive you any longer."

"Supposing you had never deceived me? Supposing I had guessed it from the very start?"

"And supposing I were to guess, now, that you had never been robbed of a sapphire bracelet?"

"That," said Miss Randolph, "is what worries me. I don't mind telling you, since this seems a time for confessions, that I never *was* robbed of a sapphire bracelet, or of any other kind. Indeed, I came here to-day to return the bracelet you sent me to the woman from whom you — er — procured it. But the woman is still stopping at the hotel, and if she sees you, she may make it unpleasant for you."

"Do you know," said Mr. Prince earnestly, "it's the very deuce to think you've deceived some one you really care for. I — I do care for you, Miss Randolph."

Perhaps it was the moonlight? Perhaps it was a certain quality in Mr. Prince's voice? Whatever it was, Miss Randolph couldn't help feeling a tenderness toward this big, handsome, faltering young man. Yet he mustn't be allowed to —

"I love you," Mr. Prince continued. "I can't help it. I don't want to help it. I just love you."

"I — I'm sure, I appreciate your caring."

"And you're not angry?"

"Oh, yes; I'm very angry!" Miss Randolph replied, forcing a little laugh.

"It isn't really funny. I — I mean it."

"I only laughed for fear I should — to see if I could," she confessed. "And I'm sure you mean it."

"I couldn't bear it if you didn't believe I meant it," Mr. Prince replied simply.

"But, really, you must consider what the woman whose bracelet you sent me will do if she sees you."

"Why, she can't possibly do anything. Not possibly."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive — just as sure as I am that my

name's Morton Prince. There are several things about that bracelet I am anxious to tell you, though. As a matter of fact, before I sent it to you, I — I say, what the deuce!"

Mr. Prince's exclamation of astonishment was entirely justified, for, as he uttered it, a little man with a gray beard dashed into the pavilion, and, with a dramatic, "Hands up!" covered him with a huge revolver.

"I suppose," said the little man, "you'll deny your identity, but it won't do you any good."

"If you don't stop pointing that revolver at me, I'll jolly well punch your head for you."

"You can't," said the little man, "I'm the constable."

"You point that revolver of yours at the floor," commanded Mr. Prince.

"I warn you I'm all-fired quick," said the constable, lowering his weapon.

"Don't you think you'd better go?" Mr. Prince whispered to the girl, suddenly apprehensive in her behalf.

"No."

"Stop that whispering," ordered the

constable. "I suppose you'll deny your identity, but —"

"Why should I deny it, you old idiot?"

"I heard you myself. I sneaked up on you, and I listened to you talking."

"What?"

"And just as I got here I heard you call yourself Morton Prince."

"Oh!" said Mr. Prince.

"Oh!" said the girl.

"And I caught the word bracelet."

"That was clever of you," said Mr. Prince, so relieved concerning the things the constable hadn't heard as to be almost friendly.

"And I guess I got you dead to rights."

"I'm afraid you have," agreed Mr. Prince, glancing at the revolver. "Would it be too much to ask you what you intend to do next?"

"I've already done it," said the constable. "You're under arrest."

"The deuce I am!"

"And I advise you to hand over that bracelet."

"What bracelet?"

"The one you stole from the lady."

"But he hasn't it," Miss Randolph began.

"Hah!" cried the constable. "I see. Hah! So he's given it to you, has he?"

"Don't be an ass!" said Mr. Prince.

"Look here, young feller —"

"What do you think you have against me, anyway?"

"Robbery, highway robbery," said the constable.

"But that's absurd!"

"It's state's prison, that's what it is."

"Who says I stole a bracelet?"

"A Mrs. Hardcastle."

"Well, I didn't. She's a blackmailing adventuress. I paid her seven hundred dollars for it."

"Why! Why!" exclaimed the girl.

"Yes," said Mr. Prince, "that is what I started to tell you: I bought the bracelet from her."

"Then there's nothing to worry about, is there?"

"Nothing at all."

"You can just bet there's something to worry about," said the constable. "I sup-

pose you didn't sneak up on Mrs. Hardcastle in the dark, and grab her bracelet, and make off with it."

"W-hat?" gasped Mr. Prince.

"I say I suppose you didn't sneak up on the lady, and grab her bracelet."

"Certainly I didn't."

"She says you did."

"She — she's mistaken."

"Well, you're under arrest, anyway. And I advise you not to try and escape, for if you do, I'll shoot the everlasting daylights out of you. I will, so help me Moses!"

"What is it you want me to do?"

"You're to go with me."

"Go where?"

"To the hotel."

"Very well," said Mr. Prince, "lead the way."

"Lead the way! What do you take me for? You march along in front."

"Just as you like."

"And you, too," said the constable, addressing Miss Randolph.

"She'll do nothing of the sort," declared Mr. Prince.

"But I want to go," said the girl.

"No," Mr. Prince replied firmly.

"How do I know she ain't an accomplice?" demanded the constable.

"Because I tell you she isn't."

"And how do I know you ain't lying?"

"I say she shall not be dragged into this."

"But I want to go."

"She's got to go."

Mr. Prince now advanced threateningly. "Another word about it, and I'll throw you into the lake," he said.

"I'll shoot you full of holes," yelled the constable.

"Please let me go with you," pleaded the girl.

"No, sweetheart."

"Please, Morton. It's really all my fault, you know."

"There!" exclaimed the constable. "It's all her fault; she says so herself. Besides, when young fellers steal jewelry, it's always for a woman."

"If you'll allow me to explain to you who I am, you will see there is no necessity for my stealing jewelry."

"You can tell all that to the judge. I'm here to arrest you, and by Godfrey, I've done it!"

"There can be no harm in my going with you," said the girl.

"It would be most unpleasant for you," Mr. Prince explained; "you would be stared at by all the people in the hotel, and —"

"Please let me go with you."

Mr. Prince hesitated.

"Please."

"I will if you'll call me Morton again," Mr. Prince whispered.

"Hey, stop that whispering!"

"It's all right," said the girl. "I'm going, too."

"Not till —" Mr. Prince began.

"I'm going with my friend Morton Prince."

"Oh, I say, that's not the way!"

"It's one way," the girl replied, mischief dancing in her eyes.

"You always do get the best of me," said Mr. Prince.

"Well, are you going, or ain't you?" demanded the constable.

"*We* are going," said the girl.

Marching side by side, the constable a few feet in the rear, Mr. Prince and Miss Randolph now made their way toward the hotel.

"It was sweet of you to stand by me," said Mr. Prince.

"I — I always mean to do that," said the girl.

"If that confounded constable weren't here, I'd —"

"Constables make excellent chaperons."

"But to think our first walk together should be —"

The girl laughed merrily. "It's too delicious," she said.

"I know, but —"

Mr. Prince did not finish his protest; instead, he smiled beatifically, for a little hand had stolen into his own.

CHAPTER XIV

THE lady with the henna-colored hair was feeling just the least bit uncomfortable. It was not that she regretted her interview with the constable; nor did she wish to withdraw one word of the exaggerated account she had given him of the robbery; but perhaps she had gone a little too far in stating positively that Mr. Prince was the thief who had stolen her bracelet. It didn't seem likely that any one else could have stolen it, yet the hand that had grasped hers had been quite rough — not at all like the hand of a gentleman. And the glimpse she had caught of the thief's back, as he vaulted over the veranda rail and scurried across the lawn, had been far from reassuring. Still, there was no use in worrying; if

there was any worrying to be done, Morton Prince could do it.

"And it would serve him right for being so stuck up," the lady decided with a malevolent titter.

Rising from her chair, she now glanced resentfully at the whispering group of guests at the other end of the veranda. It might be wise for her to take a walk in the direction of the lake. It was toward the lake that the constable had gone, and — Well, there was little advantage in sitting still. Besides, if the constable had arrested Mr. Prince, he would naturally bring him to the hotel, and then all these whispering busybodies would have even more to whisper about. So it came to pass that the lady with the henna-colored hair met the constable and his two prisoners very near the shed that sheltered Mr. Prince's powerful gray motor car.

The sight of her standing there in the moonlight came as a rude awakening to Mr. Prince, more particularly as the little hand that had been resting so trustfully on his own was now hurriedly withdrawn.

"I believe I am indebted to you for the

honor of this gentleman's acquaintance," he said, indicating the constable.

"You'll know him better than you do now if you don't give me back my bracelet," declared the lady.

"He hasn't your bracelet," said Miss Randolph.

"Who spoke to you, and what are you doing in this, anyway?"

"She's an accomplice," explained the constable.

"Hah!" said the lady.

"Won't you please go back to the pavilion and wait for me there?" Mr. Prince begged in a low voice.

"But, Morton —"

"I want you to."

"Hey, none of that!" warned the constable.

"It will make me very unhappy if you insist on staying," Mr. Prince continued, ignoring the constable.

"But will he let me go?"

"I'll attend to that. Please go, sweetheart."

"If you really wish it."

"I do wish it."

"You come back here," commanded the constable, but he might as well have commanded the moon to stand still. With head erect, and without glancing even once over her shoulder, Miss Randolph proceeded calmly on her way to the lake.

"Jumping Jehosaphat!" said the constable. "She's certainly a cool one."

"We didn't want her here, anyway," said the lady.

"Am I to understand that you accuse me of stealing a bracelet?" demanded Mr. Prince.

"I did accuse you," said the lady, "but I'm sure I don't want to get you into trouble. If you'll give the bracelet back —"

"Unfortunately, I haven't it."

"Look here," said the constable, who had been studying Mr. Prince's face, "are you sure this is the man that robbed you?"

"Sure? Of course, I'm sure. He can either give me the bracelet, or seven hundred dollars; it's all the same to me."

"Stop it!" said the constable. "That's no way to do business. If he's guilty he

goes to jail. Why, if you was to accept seven hundred dollars from him you'd be compounding a felony."

"He's guilty, all right," declared the lady. "Just because he's rich he needn't think he can come it over me."

"Is he rich?" asked the constable.

"I should say he was!"

"Then I don't believe he done it."

"I tell you he did."

"It ain't reasonable to think a rich man would rob people."

"That," said Mr. Prince, "is the first glimmer of common sense you've shown this evening."

"I ain't saying you're innocent, young man, and I don't want none of your sass, either," warned the constable.

"Well," said Mr. Prince, "what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to put you in jail if Mrs. Hardcastle will swear to a warrant."

"I — I hardly like to do that," said the lady. "If you'll leave us alone, constable, perhaps Mr. Prince and I can come to some satisfactory agreement."

"And I refuse to be left alone with this woman, or to enter into any agreement of any kind with her."

"Oh, you do, do you?" the lady exclaimed angrily. "I want to tell you right now, I'm just as good as you are, and better. And I'll swear out that warrant against you if it's the last thing I do on earth." Her voice was quivering with rage.

"You'd better not," cautioned Mr. Prince.

"What the lady says, goes," said the constable. "You ain't been any too civil to me, young man, and if she's willing to run the risk of swearing to a warrant, I'm the man to jail you."

"Do you mean to tell me you would dare take this woman's word to that extent?"

"If she's mistaken, it's her funeral, not mine," said the constable. "You come with me to the hotel, son, and we'll get a nice little wagon, and tote you off to jail."

"Yes," said the lady, "he goes to jail. And I leave by the early train to-morrow morning," she added under her breath.

"You — you really mean it?" gasped Mr. Prince.

"You can better believe I do," said the constable.

"Well, I guess not," said a voice at Mr. Prince's elbow. "I'm the guy that took the bracelet."

Quite overwhelmed by this unexpected and astonishing announcement, the startled trio turned and stared at — Bill.

"If you don't believe me, here it is," Bill continued, holding the bracelet aloft for all to see.

"But, but — how on earth?" Mr. Prince began.

"Bill Potts, I'm surprised at you," said the constable.

"You give me my bracelet," demanded the lady.

"Not on your life," said Bill.

"And I've known him ever since he was knee-high to a grasshopper," mourned the constable.

"It's all right, Mr. Hawkins," said Bill, addressing the constable. "This here bracelet belongs to Mr. Prince, and I can prove it."

"It don't, and you can't," declared the lady. "You give me my bracelet."

"Did you really take it from her by force?" Mr. Prince asked sternly.

"If he says it's all right, it's sure all right," said the constable. "I've known Bill ever since he was born, and there ain't an honester boy in the state."

"Honest nothing! He's a thief, you old goat; he stole my bracelet!"

"It ain't her bracelet, and I can prove it. Mr. Prince he paid her seven hundred dollars for it; I heard him say so."

"Does that make it so?" snapped the lady.

"It sure does. Besides, didn't you admit it?"

"No, I didn't."

"She did, too," said Bill addressing the constable. "I heard her."

"But you shouldn't have taken it from her, Bill."

"Do you think I was going to stand by and see you done out of seven hundred dollars?" Bill asked reproachfully.

"If this man's a friend of yours," began the constable.

"Friend of mine? Well, I should say he

was! Say, Mr. Hawkins, he's the finest ever. And good to me! Gosh!"

"You get my bracelet for me, or I'll make it hot for you," threatened the lady in a fine fury.

"I'm liable to, ain't I?" replied the constable.

"Do you mean you'll take that kid's word against mine?"

"Every time."

"I'm no end sorry you should have been subjected to such — er — to such methods," said Mr. Prince.

"Sorry, my foot! I believe you put him up to it."

"You'd ought to be ashamed, setting an officer of the law on an innocent man," said the constable.

"I don't yet see how it came about," said Mr. Prince.

"Well, you see," Bill explained. "I was settin' near you on the porch when you and the lady was chinning about the bracelet, so I couldn't help hearing. And, since then, I've been hanging about in the shed there where the car is, waiting for you to come

back from the lake. I knowed you wasn't alone down there, or else —"

"I see. Give me the bracelet, please. Thank you. And now, if you'll leave me alone with this lady — Mr. Hawkins, I hope you'll pardon any incivility on my part. You will understand that I was a little upset, and —"

"Sure," replied the constable. "And I don't blame you. Shake."

"You ain't sore with me, are you?" asked Bill.

"No, indeed; I'm most grateful to you."

"He's a good boy," said the constable.

"None better," declared Mr. Prince. "Good-night, Mr. Hawkins. Good-night, Bill."

"Well," said the lady, "I hope you're satisfied."

"I am, and I'm not," Mr. Prince replied. "I am very glad to have the bracelet, but I'm sorry to have acquired it in such an unusual and — er — distressing manner. I apologize most sincerely for the treatment you received in the hands of my chauffeur."

"Bah," said the lady, "don't be a hypocrite! You got the best of me, and that's all there is to it. I wish you joy of your bracelet, Morton Prince."

"But I'd like to make some amends. I would, truly."

"I don't suppose you'd care to give me the bracelet?"

"N-no. But if there's anything else I can do?"

The lady now regarded Mr. Prince with something very like admiration. "Say, I believe you mean it," she said.

"Of course, I mean it."

"And I'm blessed if I don't think I could touch you for a hundred or two for hurting my feelings."

"I was about to suggest something of the sort," Mr. Prince admitted.

"No," said the lady, "it would be too easy. I'm a lot decenter woman than you imagine, Morton Prince."

"I'm sure you're not," Mr. Prince replied, with unconscious equivocation.

"I've pulled your leg all I'm going to," the lady continued firmly. "You've treated

me whiter than most would, and I hope you and the girl will be happy. That's straight."

Mr. Prince was profoundly touched. "I hope you will be happy, too," he said, extending his hand. "Good-night."

"I've been so worried," Miss Randolph confessed when Mr. Prince joined her a few moments later in the pavilion. "Did that dreadful woman —"

"No," replied Mr. Prince, "she was really very nice about it. Look, sweetheart."

"Why, you have the bracelet!"

"Your bracelet," corrected Mr. Prince, pressing it into her hand. "You'll keep it always, won't you? And, Dorothy, girl —"

"Yes, Morton."

A gentle breeze stirred the willows, overhead the moon smiled tenderly, but the sapphire bracelet slipped to the floor and lay there, quite forgotten.

THE END